

# RESULTS OF AN ACCIDENT.

By  
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THE house was so old that the floor in Doctor Persenthein's bedroom sloped unevenly downwards ; and this was one of the things which worried Frau Persenthein. The beds stood on a slant, and when you were tired you slipped down in your sleep towards the foot of the bed. The doctor's wife never slept very soundly, and this discomfort caused her sleep to be even more broken and disturbed. Sometimes she dreamed with terror that she was slipping down some steep hill. So if the night-bell broke into her dreams and roused her, she did not know whether she had actually been asleep or whether she had experienced this dreadful fear in a half-wakeful state. She touched the bed next to her own. It was empty ! She turned on the light and looked at the clock. Half-past two in the morning. As she pulled her large woollen shawl round her shoulders and walked down the strange, creaking, wooden staircase she could hear the child breathing in the little room. The ring at the door sounded impatient and urgent. The light was burning in the surgery. Elisabeth Persenthein entered it on tiptoe before she went to open the front door.

Doctor Persenthein had fallen asleep. His arms and head rested on a copy of the *Munich Medical Journal*. In the lamplight his scalp shone dimly through his fair thin silky hair. The steriliser caught and held his reflection : a tiny picture of the sleeping doctor was repro-

duced in the nickel-plate. The weariness of his shoulders, his large hands, with their skin rough and cracked from so much washing, his long fingers with their short finger-nails—all these were reflected in the bright metal of the steriliser.

“Nick !” Elisabeth called into the room. She spoke just loudly enough to awaken him, but not loudly enough to startle him. He responded at once.

“I am not asleep,” he answered promptly. “It is not late. I must just finish this article. . . .”

Frau Persenthein did not usually answer remarks of this kind. She had given up arguing with her husband over his working until all hours of the night. She smiled—and her smile was meant to be brisk and encouraging. But she, too, was tired ; the strained little wrinkle over her left eyebrow was twitching, so that her smile was a somewhat dismal and tense performance. The door-bell rang insistently.

“A patient. I’ll open the door,” Frau Persenthein said.

Doctor Nikolaus Persenthein washed his hands mechanically. “Always at night. These rabbits. My handbag——” he said.

Usually the people who came for the doctor at night were workmen from Obanger, a settlement on the outskirts of the town, men exhausted and very much agitated ; or else they were peasants from villages beyond the Dösswalder Forest, whose wives had chased them from their beds to fetch the doctor. Since the time when three people had died of influenza they sent for the doctor whenever anyone had a fever or a cough. They usually came for him when it was too late, but they came for him nevertheless, and when they had once made up their minds to fetch him they did not care what time of day or night it was. Frau Persenthein pushed his motor-cycle out of the shed.

She looked through the contents of his instrument bag.

"Omnadin? Syringe? Physostigmin?" Doctor Persenthein asked as he put on his leather motoring coat. He was pretending to be more wideawake than he really was. The woman closed the instrument bag with a snap and fastened it on to the motor-cycle. In front of the house a cool wind, coming with the dawn, played about her bare feet. Persenthein grumbled impatiently at the man, who stood there with a hurt expression on his face and began to exaggerate the illness of the patient he had left at home, so that this nightly expedition might be more fully justified. Though Doctor Persenthein was hurrying, it was some time before they were off, for he was a man whose movements were very slow. He was still fiddling about with the motor-cycle. He unbuttoned his jacket again to look for something. He opened his bag and checked its contents. Finally, when the church clock was striking three, the motor-cycle with the grumbling doctor in front and an offended and sulky man on the pillion-seat at the back rattled through the City Gate and away. Elisabeth could now return to her bedroom with the sloping floor and to her devastated dreams.

The reason why the floor sloped and the beds stood on the slant was because the Persentheins lived in a very old half-timbered house. Really it was no house at all; but just an appendage of the old City Tower, which was called the Angermann. The doctor's house was called the Angermann House, and for it they paid the Lohwinkel City Council a rental of only eight hundred marks a year. A part of the old City Wall now formed the back wall of the house. The mortar between the stones in the old wall had become loosened in the course of centuries, and the old Angermann House trembled every time a motor-car drove into Lohwinkel through the City



Gate. Then the floors, the staircase and the beams in the ceilings would begin to sigh with that soft lament of very old wood, which has carried heavy burdens for several hundred years. At such moments Frau Persenthein would stand still, curiously motionless and self-contained, as she felt the vibrations in the walls and listened for the strange creakings in the woodwork. When, a few moments later, a little mortar trickled down out of the panelling on to the floor, Frau Persenthein would pull herself together, take the dustcloth out of the cupboard, kneel down and wipe away the tiny heaps of mortar.

"We'd better watch out, mother," Lungaus, the workman who lodged up in the attic room, would say on such occasions, "some day the whole building will come crashing down on our heads."

Frau Persenthein was twenty-nine and Lungaus was fifty-eight, and he did not like her; but he called her "mother." "The wood in the roof creaked all night long," he would announce to her with a gloomy look when she brought him his breakfast in the morning. Sometimes she considered his prophecies for half a moment and then said: "No, Lungaus, I think the house will go on standing."

"But I tell you——" Lungaus would persist, for he was ill and also impatient by nature.

"Don't worry, Lungaus. The wall has stood for several hundred years and will probably last our lifetime as well. But it's true the mortar is a bit loose," was Elisabeth's way of ending these discussions, as she carried the cup for Lungaus' milk to the kitchen sink, where she patiently wiped away the chalky dust, which the morning bus had shaken into it.

"This house is a spiteful rascal," asserted Lungaus, as he went shuffling after her into the kitchen. He wore Doctor Persenthein's old slippers on his bare feet and the

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patches in the doctor's discarded trousers bulged over his thin, pointed knees. A bitter smell always seemed to envelop Lungaus, like that of damp foliage in the autumn. Elisabeth's nerves were always a little bit on edge when her husband's old clothes walked, ghostlike, through the house on Lungaus' body. But she spoke to him kindly : " Yes, you are right. There is something queer about this house."

For the house, with its crazy turnings and corners, caused her endless labour. It was difficult to keep it clean, to air it, or to heat it. The rent was low, but its upkeep in one way or another ate up large sums of money. Repairs were constantly necessary. Electric wires had to be laid. Then a plant for running water was installed, for the doctor needed running water in the surgery. And when the running water was installed, he was not satisfied until he had fitted up some sort of arrangement for medicinal baths in the cellar—salt baths for children suffering from rickets, carbonic acid baths ; and, finally, he built in a small inhaling cabinet. Practically all the inhabitants of Obanger wallowed in these baths, which cost the doctor a great deal of money, as the panel contributed next to nothing towards them. But Nick was an eccentric character, and the baths were part of his Idea, an Idea about which there will be much to say. . . .

Lungaus sat down on the coal-bin, dangling his legs. His slippers fell from his feet, like ripe fruit, and the large balls of his toes came into view. He watched the woman lighting the fire in the hearth.

" I suppose it's about time to chop some kindling wood," he remarked.

" Yes, Lungaus, that would be good," Elisabeth answered encouragingly.

" I don't feel particularly well," Lungaus said, and there was a note of refusal in his voice.

Elisabeth sighed and became frightened. "Lungaus—surely you haven't——? You haven't been to the White Swan——? You haven't eaten anything——? Sausage——? Salt *brezel*——? No? Have you been drinking or smoking? You must tell me the truth. It's I who get scolded by the doctor, not you. Have you done any of these things?"

"Oh, no. . . ." Lungaus answered uncertainly. His answer did not satisfy Elisabeth at all. She looked at Lungaus keenly and closely—he did not really look ill at all. His lips were the proper colour, and he had got a little fatter round the neck.

"And where is Rehle, I should like to know?" asked Lungaus severely, while Elisabeth knelt before the stubborn hearth breathing in the blue smoke from the damp wood.

"The child has, of course, gone with the doctor on his rounds," she answered coughing.

"Of course! That child is always being dragged along at any hour of the day or night to these beastly influenza cases." His voice reflected a real bitterness; for all the affection of which his dried-up nature was capable was concentrated on little five-year-old Rehle.

"You know quite well that it's his Idea," Elisabeth said. As she spoke she felt a stinging sensation at the root of her nose and she felt she would begin to weep.

"Yes, that's his Idea right enough," Lungaus said as he fished for his slippers with his toes. "As I've often said, it would be better to sell one's carcase to an anatomy college. There, at any rate, they don't dissect one until one's dead, and then one doesn't feel anything. But to be experimented on like a rabbit when one is still alive—well, I ask you. . . ."

"Why, you're all right. He has cured you," Elisabeth said, as he shuffled towards the kitchen door.



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At the door he stood still. "What do I get to eat at nine o'clock?" he asked with irritation.

"Banana stew. As soon as the fire is started properly I'll cook it," Elisabeth said.

"You haven't an easy life, either," Lungaus remarked as he disappeared.

Elisabeth remained standing by the oven. She was too stubborn to weep. It took her almost ten minutes to pull herself together; but, when she had done so, she felt amused. For it was really comic to think that this slippered ghost, this household plague of a Lungaus, this pest of her married life, should be feeling pity for her. By the time she was stirring the banana stew she was able to laugh about it.

She kept an eye on the kitchen fire; washed the breakfast dishes; peeled some carrots for Lungaus' dinner (Lungaus was on a very special diet, and subsisted entirely on the extracts of natural foods); rubbed her stained fingers with pumice stone; and scolded the little daily maid, who arrived late as usual. This, too, was one of the things that worried Elisabeth. Lungaus lived in the small attic room, so there was no place (or money, either) to house a real servant, and the various "daily helps" (of all ages from fifteen to sixty-eight) often left Elisabeth in the lurch.

She went down to the surgery on the ground floor and began to tidy up the room. She counted the cigar ends, sighed a little and then laughed, for Doctor Persenthein, who was fanatically opposed to nicotine, was a prodigious smoker. She went to the telephone and rang up the house of Profet, the owner of the factory, to inquire about the morning temperature of his second son. It was 38.2 centigrade, and she made a note of this fact on the desk pad. She lit the spirit lamp under the steriliser

and laid out fresh linen and a clean white jacket for Nick. Then she polished the operating chair. In the meantime, speculæ clamps, funnel and tubes were boiling. She bent over the *Medical Journal* for five minutes and turned the pages, where the magazine was opened at an article on "The Prevention of Sepsis in Cases of Injuries among Agricultural Labourers." She gazed at this article with the tense and searching look with which other women regard their female rivals. Sepsisprophylaxis! So that was what was causing Nick sleepless nights. The house trembled, mortar fell from the walls. The nine o'clock bus was returning from the station. Elisabeth dragged herself up the stairs to take the stewed bananas to Lungaus' room in the attic.

"I am sick to death of bananas, mother," Lungaus remarked. He was lying on the bed. He had closed the window.

"Get up. Go and take your walk," was all she said. "Don't let the doctor find you loafing about like this when he gets home."

"What? Go out this beastly weather?" Lungaus answered resentfully. Elisabeth gazed out of the slanting attic window, which did not look towards the town, but in the direction of the suburb of Obanger. A mountain ash, which was growing out of the city wall, swayed in the wind. The heavy rain was over, and a wall of grey mist rose above the smoke which was streaming from the factory chimney in the valley. And Nick was out there with Rehle on the pillion-seat. . . .

The telephone rang in the hall. A toll call. Elisabeth took the message. Afterwards she stood still for a moment in front of the receiver, biting the knuckle of her right forefinger, as she always did when she heard bad news. She went into the surgery and wrote down the message:

"The hospital in Schaffenburg telephoned. Doctor



Schroeder says that Jacob Wirz, the farm labourer, has had to have his left arm amputated. The amputation was made a hand's width below the man's shoulder."

She thought for a moment, and then she drew a little circle next to the message on the pad. This was an old secret code sign between them, and the circle stood for a kiss. It meant, "Poor Nick." And it meant, "Don't be over-anxious!" And it meant, "Elisabeth is here and wants to comfort you. . . ."

It should be mentioned that Doctor Persenthein thoroughly disapproved of these symbols of love floating about his note-books; and, as Elisabeth stood still for a moment, deep in thought, and heard the humming of the water boiling in the steriliser, and saw the old fat volume of Aristotle among the pile of medical journals on the wide window-sill, she suddenly felt that the circle she had drawn next to the distressing message was insincere. She had drawn the circle merely as a matter of form; she had not really felt moved at all. At least, her feeling had not been that painful, heartbreaking pity which is awakened only by love. No—she had not felt this, and so she took the india-rubber and erased the kiss from the pad. So the message about Jacob Wirz's bungled, poisoned, amputated arm remained alone, and unadorned, on the doctor's pad.

When she went out into the hall, she found a number of patients waiting for the doctor. A woman from Dösswald with her child; Lieschen from the Estate, with an inflammation of the middle ear; a thin, miserable workman, who sat twisting his cap, with a resigned and melancholy look on his face.

"Good morning, Herr Lingel," Elisabeth said. "Are you ill again?"

"That's the way it goes with lead poisoning—every

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few months you get it into your bones again," the man answered patiently.

"Well, the doctor will be here any moment," Elisabeth said as she walked slowly up the stairs. By this time she was able to diagnose lead poisoning without her husband's assistance. This disease was a Lohwinkel speciality which one could acquire in Profet's accumulator factory without any trouble. Some of the men caught the disease in three months' time, and came to show the doctor the black rims round their gums and their dull eyes, and to tell him about the pains in their stomachs. Some of them, on the other hand, were employed in the factory for years without becoming ill. The twenty-fifth anniversary of their employment would be duly announced in the local newspaper, and throughout their long years of service they would be as strong as cart-horses.

"Predisposition," Doctor Persenthein would say, for, in the rush of his practice he had acquired the habit of speaking only in nouns, and not in complete sentences. It should be mentioned, by the way, that Doctor Persenthein was not of a resigned nature. On the contrary, he was a great fighter, and after he had been practising in Lohwinkel for a little while, he began to fight, not only against the prevalent lead poisoning, but also against the "predisposition" of the inhabitants as well. He groped ahead in his mind, as though he were probing his way with a surgical stylet, until he hit upon the Idea—his Idea. But what in Heaven's name was the good of this Idea to an ordinary young country doctor, who was practising in a small market town of seven thousand souls? His Idea, which made him cranky and crotchety, aloof and abstracted, caused him to live as in a vacuum. This Idea of his, which possessed him more than he possessed it, set him apart in a cheerless, lonely seclusion. Since the

time when Doctor Persenthein began to think so profoundly, the little Angermann House had become a sort of purgatory. . . .

Frau Persenthein went into the kitchen and began her cooking. The process of cooking in this household was so intricate that it verged on madness. Lungaus' expensive and strange diet had to be prepared; vegetables, fruit, raw eggs, curious home-made bread, all sorts of things which took endless trouble to prepare and which Lungaus ate only under protest. Rehle, the child, was given a similar diet, but her meals were just different enough to necessitate special cooking. Nick, on the other hand, needed meat, lots of meat, roast meat, highly seasoned meat, followed by strong coffee. On very strenuous days he drank a glass of wine with his meals. He himself needed large quantities of all the foodstuffs which he declared to be unhealthy and injurious. Without them he felt so slack that he could not concentrate properly at his three-o'clock surgery time. Elisabeth herself had no special wishes as to food, as long as it was cheap and easy to prepare. She and the maid ate whatever there was; they ate the food that was left over, with quantities of potatoes. In this kitchen, which was governed by medical principles, the potatoes were always boiled in their skins. The skins contained some element—Elisabeth could never remember what it was called—which constituted a necessary food value. She bent over the sink and scrubbed the potatoes with a small brush until they shone. Her fingers were badly stained, but now she was too tired to wash them again with pumice stone. Her heels and her shoulder-blades were aching.

Then she climbed down into the cellar to supervise the maid, who was cleaning the two bathrooms. They smelt of medicine, of lysoform, of iodine salts, and of cresol soap solution.



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"Katrinnen has made a mess again," Elisabeth said, smiling. Katrinchen was a fat and worthy spider, who attached her webs to every corner of the cellar. Elisabeth swept away the webs, but she always felt a twinge of regret whenever she destroyed Katrinchen's habitations. Down in the cellar a constant warfare was waged against a multitude of creatures, all of them only too eager to live: mice, cockroaches, and tiny nameless insects looking like small steel needles come to life, whose ambition it was to dwell in the bath tubs.

Upstairs, in the meantime, the morning surgery calls were in full swing. The hall smelt of human beings and of tobacco smoke, and was full of muddy, autumnal foot-prints. Nick's wet motoring coat hung on the hook. Elisabeth had not seen him come in. Rehle was squatting in the shed cleaning the motor-cycle.

Rehle wore trousers, a kind of overall which Elisabeth had tried, none too successfully, to copy from a pattern in a fashion magazine. The inhabitants of Lohwinkel were offended by the little girl's trousers, which they considered as one of the many idiosyncrasies in which the doctor's household seemed to abound. Actually, Rehle's little blue overalls were practical and not at all eccentric, for she always rode on the back of her father's motor-cycle, with her short little arms clasped tightly round his stomach, and Nick always insisted on taking her with him on his visits in the surrounding villages and towns. The overalls, therefore, did not really deserve the adverse criticism bestowed upon them by the inhabitants of Lohwinkel.

"Puss, puss," Rehle said without looking up, as Elisabeth stood leaning her aching shoulder-blades against the door of the shed for a moment. "Puss," had been Rehle's form of greeting since the time when she was a very little girl. In the meantime she had developed

into a remarkably independent human being. She was unusually tall for a child of five, and her hands and feet were much too large for her size.

"Well, Hazelmouse?" Elisabeth asked. Rehle had many pet names; but Rehle did not like demonstrations of affection.

"I'm nice and dirty, aren't I?" she said, displaying face, hands and boots in the shaft of light, which penetrated into the shed through a hole in the City Wall.

"Wet feet?" Elisabeth asked.

"Of course!" Rehle answered.

Elisabeth dropped her hand to her side—she had wanted to caress Rehle—and then she went back into the house. Rehle always had wet feet, and her shoes were never changed. This was one of Nick's educational principles, a part of his Idea, a factor in his fight against predispositions. . . .

Eleven o'clock. Back once more to the kitchen to prepare Lungaus' third breakfast—milk with the juice of an orange, which Heinrich Markus, who kept the local shop, had to obtain for her at a high price from the nearest big town. Then she must tidy up the living-rooms, and then collect the memoranda, which Nick had left in the bedroom, before the maid threw them away. Then there was Rehle's lunch, and then she had to take a cup of tea for Nick into the surgery, where he was painting the tonsils of a howling child. And then she must tidy up Rehle's little room.

But Rehle's room had already been tidied. Rehle was getting independent. She was on her knees under her railed cot and was wiping the floor. The window and the door were wide open. The room was in a fine draught and it was icy cold; but it was tidy. Her dolls lay in a neat row. They were all ill and displayed bandages

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round their heads, arms and legs. The bandages were made of real gauze, although perhaps no longer aseptic. A little piece of white wood had been jammed under the arm of Erika, the favourite doll, and a red line on the wood represented the mercury, which permanently registered a temperature of 39 degrees centigrade. Rehle had already learned to write figures, but 38 was too difficult, 37 was too dull, being just a normal temperature, and 40 too high a temperature, and therefore too dangerous.

"Afterwards I'm going to the butcher's, to do the shopping," Rehle announced from under the bed in a choking voice.

"You're a good little girl," said Elisabeth.

"Oh, yes," from Rehle, with great self-complacency.

In Rehle's presence Elisabeth always felt herself to be a little superfluous, for the child, who stood so firmly in her little wet boots, never showed any emotion, and never wanted emotion. Frau Persenthein disappeared again into the domestic regions of the house, and found plenty to do there until five minutes to one. Then the motor-bus drove through the Gate for the second time, the house trembled promptly, and mortar trickled out of the wall. Elisabeth dashed up to Lungaus' room with his dinner. Then she went into her bedroom to wash her hands. Her hands had once been nice, and she was still a little vain of them; but when she thought of the time when they had been nice, she felt as though she were seventy-eight instead of twenty-nine. As she untied her kitchen apron, she looked blankly into her mirror. It was a small, old mirror and swung on its hinges. You could not see everything at once in its greenish depths; you just had to take one thing at a time. First Elisabeth looked at her narrow face with the little wrinkle over her left eye, and she noticed that her



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lips were a bit too wide and too pale. Her hair was all right; it was like Rehle's, smooth and light brown. Then her neck: it was rather too long and rather too thin. Then her shoulders and her breasts—well, yes, Elisabeth did not think herself pretty. Her figure reminded her of Sigismunda von Raitzold's stone sarcophagus in the Lohwinkel Church. Sigismunda, who was four hundred years old, was not very pretty either. Nick, on the other hand, always reminded her of the enterprising Saint George on the façade of the Angermann Tower. . . .

She went to the window and looked up at the Angermann Tower. Saint George, with set lance, was riding at the dragon. Saint George breathed courage and the dragon breathed fire, and both were made of wood. Elisabeth had loved Saint George ever since, as a little girl, she had walked through the Angermann Tower hand in hand with her father, Burhenne, the Head Master of the Lohwinkel Gymnasium. As she grew older, she thought that Saint George looked like Schiller. And later still, she noticed that Saint George was rather like that young Doctor Persenthein. . . .

She went downstairs, knocked three times at the surgery door and said: "Nick, you must come for your dinner. Otherwise it will be too late for your afternoon appointments."

"I'm coming, at once," said the doctor from inside the room.

"At once" with Nick always meant a quarter of an hour. Elisabeth went upstairs. The table was laid. She opened the piano for a moment, struck a few chords and listened, her lips parted, until the sound had floated away. The omnibus was returning from the station. The house trembled, some mortar trickled down. Upstairs she heard Rehle quarrelling loudly with Lungaus. Down-



stairs the shuffling steps of the last morning patients could be heard leaving the house. Elisabeth went back to the window. She wanted to see whether Doctor Persenthein really looked like Saint George.

“No !” she thought, as she served the soup. “He does not look a bit like him any more.”

**D**OCTOR PERSENTHEIN was thirty-eight years old. He was a tall, thin man with broad, heavy shoulders. His skin was so clear that on days when he was overworked it looked transparent and showed bluish veins. His hair, which was growing thin, receded from his forehead in sharp curves. The bridge of his large nose was narrow and aggressive. His mouth, with its broad teeth, occupied a considerable space in his face, and the deep lines that ran from the corners of his mouth to his nose expressed his intense and highly-strung nature.

Doctor Persenthein's father had been a low-grade civil servant, who wanted his son to have a better position in the world. Young Persenthein began by studying law; but he started to drift into the medical lectures-room at the university, stuck there, and finally became a fixture in the medical school. He gave up Law and took up Medicine with a will that overcame everything, including the opposition of his family. The study of medicine gradually took possession of him. He studied at two large universities in two small cities. He took his first degree and qualified, after passing examinations in anatomy, physiology, histology, pathology and bacteriology. He wrote a thesis on osteo-metastasis. Then came the Great War. He was given the post of junior assistant at the new hospital in Markenheim, a city of half a million souls. Here he had his first experience of wrong diag-

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noses and mistakes, and sometimes deaths resulted from these mistakes. A heart attack during an anæsthetic—why? Embolism caused by the entrance of air during an ordinary operation on a goitre—why? A patient bleeding to death after suture of the gall-bladder—why? And these things did not happen to him, the junior assistant; they happened to the Geheimrat himself, the great, world-famous surgeon, the most eminent specialist in his line. Persenthein, the insignificant junior assistant, was allowed only to stand by and hand the great man the clamps or hold the objects he needed. For the first time Persenthein began to doubt the divinity of great surgeons and the omnipotence of medicine; but his doubts disappeared when he himself was appointed assistant surgeon at the hospital at Schaffenburg, and had more than enough to do.

He rattled through the various wards of the hospital, which was not very large. He was caught in a few blind alleys of theoretical and experimental research—for seven months, for instance, he was absorbed in hormones, and neglected his regular duties; but, by constant practice in vivisection, his hands became surer and steadier. In the meantime he had been assigned to the gynæcological ward. The method by which the young doctor was moved from ward to ward in the course of his general medical training was not unlike the conveyor system in a factory. In G Ward, the gynæcological department of the hospital, he came across Elisabeth, who was training to become a nurse and whose duty it was to preside over a room of nineteen new-born infants.

The love that he felt for this tall and slender girl was as tenacious and dominating as his passion for medicine had been a few years before. He rushed into engagement and marriage, and he did not come to his senses again until he found himself established with the Lohwinkel



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practice, which he inherited from an uncle of his wife's. He became a husband, a citizen, and the tenant of the Angermann House. Soon he put up two plates on his door. On one it said: "Dr. Nikolaus Persenthein, Physician and Gynæcologist," while the other was a notice-board on which was inscribed, "I am at . . . and shall return at . . . o'clock." Whenever Doctor Persenthein was called to one of the villages, and an entry had to be made on the second notice-board, it created the impression that his practice was a very busy one indeed.

In those days, he really did look like Saint George. He felt that he knew a little about everything, but that he knew nothing really well, and during the many doubts and difficulties of the next two years, a large pile of medical books and periodicals, to which he could refer and seek advice, was his greatest comfort.

At first he was sent for only when people could not possibly do without him. In childbirth cases, for instance, when things were not going smoothly and the midwife could not manage alone. Two years later he had mastered Professor Kristeller's obstetrical method, and, as a result, there were fewer ruptures of the perineum.

Before Rehle was born, however, he took no risks and sent Elisabeth to Schaffenburg. Neither she nor Doctor Schroeder made much ado about her case, but it took nine hours and when the baby was born it weighed the normal six and a half pounds. When Rehle was three months old, Nick and Elisabeth had their first disagreement as to the correct way to bring up this healthy infant whom they both loved passionately, though in different ways. Elisabeth loved her child tenderly and dreamily. Nick Persenthein's feelings for the child, on the other hand, were as aggressively fanatical as all his other emotions. Elisabeth had been trained as a baby's nurse, but Doctor Persenthein had thought out his own peculiar views

about the child's upbringing—she was born just at the time when his "Idea" first began to take hold of him—and he remained victorious.

"I want my child to grow up like a deer in the forest," the doctor told his frightened father-in-law, the Head Master.

So the baby was called Rehle, "little deer," and brought up accordingly. As one could not protect human beings against dangerous diseases, Doctor Persenthein claimed that it was better to expose them to these dangers, so that their systems, their "predispositions," could be trained to dispose of these dangers once and for all. As a result, Rehle grew up like a young bear or like an Eskimo child. Heat and cold, snow and sun, damp and draughts, all these things were let loose against this tiny thing. When she was three months old she was put naked in her playroom pen, where she taught herself alone and surprisingly quickly the human arts of crawling, sitting, walking and standing. At two years old, Rehle was as covered with scars as a war veteran, but she was also very familiar with all kinds of angular, pointed, sharp, burning, and otherwise hurtful objects of daily life, which, by this method, she had learned to avoid adroitly. She smelt everything, devoured everything, and nothing made her ill. She grew to be large and strong. Occasionally she suffered from a slight concussion of the brain, but she never caught a cold in the head. When she was three years old, Doctor Persenthein tied this daughter of his to the pillion-seat of his new motor-cycle and took her with him on his round of visits. Gradually, according to a schedule which he had worked out, he exposed her to all kinds of germs. He exposed her to everything from a contagious cold, the germs of which are unknown, to the popular Klebs-Loeffler bacilli, which cause diphtheria. Strange as it may seem, Rehle was never ill. Her good health was not

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exactly a scientific proof that his theory was correct, but he often liked to think it was. All human beings, who are so possessed by one idea, have dizzy, unbalanced moments of this kind.

Elisabeth could not have endured the terrible fear she felt for her little girl if she had not been religious. She discussed the matter with God and with the Madonna. Often when shopping she would slip into the old Catholic Church, and kneel in front of the sarcophagus of Sigismunda von Raitzold. Here she found comfort and peace. The doctor swore by the power of his Idea, and Elisabeth swore by the power of Prayer. And Rehle flourished and was healthy.

The people in Lohwinkel, meanwhile, allowed themselves to be treated by their crazy doctor, but they did not think much of him, and, in the course of a few years, their smiling contempt for him changed into bitter hostility.

The inhabitants of Lohwinkel are neither more nor less healthy than those of any other small towns. Statistics show an average percentage of cases of rickets and T.B. Lohwinkel has its annual period of influenza, and its rising and falling curves of whooping cough, measles, scarlet fever and diphtheria. The people try to throw off sore throats, earaches and incipient gastric ulcers without seeing a doctor. Those who suffer from rheumatism go to see Behrendt, the chemist. Appendicitis cases go to the nearest large town, if they can possibly afford it. The cases that remained for Doctor Persenthein were broken bones, childbirths, infantile ailments, and the ordinary panel practice. And there was also that lead poisoning.

In Lohwinkel people contracted lead poisoning in Profet's accumulator factory. This factory, the only one in the district, which employed a large number of workers within its gloomy, yellowish-grey walls, was situated on the outskirts of the town, near Obanger. Doctor Persen-




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thein had established the fact that on the average twenty-eight per cent. of the workers employed in this factory contracted lead poisoning. He immersed himself in the scientific literature concerning this occupational disease, which frequently appeared in the guise of other ailments, such as anæmia, convulsions, pains, or various kinds of abdominal, intestinal or renal troubles. He studied the statistics published by the large accumulator factories, where everything possible was done to protect the workers against the disease. In those factories the disease had practically vanished, its prevalence had been reduced to one-half per cent. Profet's factory, on the other hand, with its insanitary equipment (it had formerly been a dye-works and had been hastily and badly converted), was a regular poison trap. Herr Profet himself was not entirely responsible for these conditions, for his hands were tied as long as Herr von Raitzold stubbornly refused to part with even an acre of his land, and thus prevented any extension of the factory. The workers themselves, these "rabbits" as Persenthein called them, were careless about this danger of poison, and acted as though every inhabitant of Obanger was doomed sooner or later to acquire lead poisoning. The doctor witnessed these conditions for a little while; and then he went on the war-path.

Dr. Persenthein began to search for a successful treatment for lead poisoning.

In the course of the next three years he found six tested and approved methods against the disease. He also worked out two new methods which proved failures. The people in Lohwinkel grew sceptical, but they were not as sceptical as Dr. Persenthein himself. He could not sleep, and he tore round the district in a state of feverish and unamiable irritation. His eyelids became inflamed, and his long Germanic skull was dented and furrowed





under the stress of his thoughts, worries and experimental failures. His patients were afraid of their doctor (and this reacted unfavourably on their condition), and Elisabeth, too, was afraid of him. She was afraid of the stubborn grief which she so often saw in his eyes. She was afraid of his abrupt awakenings during the night, of the impatience in his voice. Her nerves were ragged from listening, watching and waiting for the sound of his voice. Sometimes she felt this fear creeping coldly up her spine. She would liked to have taken the man in her arms, where she could have appeased and quieted him. This, however, was just what he did not want. He was on the battlefield, fighting against a whole city, against Disease. He was, indeed, waging war against Science itself. So he had to stay hard and tense and restless.

For three years now, Lungaus, the refractory and quarrelsome object of his medical experiments, had been living in the Angermann House. Lungaus was the centre round which the doctor's thoughts revolved.

It was twenty minutes past five, the surgery hours were over, and the air in the surgery was heavy with the smell of all the anxious and diseased patients who had passed through the room during the afternoon.

"Get dressed," Doctor Persenthein said, as he washed his hands. Lungaus crept back into his clothes.

The doctor packed together the cards on which he had noted Lungaus's case history. Altogether, they were as thick as a pamphlet.

"You are now cured, Lungaus," he said.

"How do you mean?" Lungaus replied doubtfully as he fished for his braces.

"Yes, you are cured. You will continue to live here in my house under supervision, but you will start work again. I have spoken to Herr Profet."

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“ Will he take me back ? ”

“ I have asked him to and he will do so for my sake.”

“ For your sake ? Why, he can't bear the sight of you.”

“ Perhaps he has reason to respect me, since I put the Inspector on his track and made him install a vacuum cleaner in the Factory,” Persenthein replied. It was a curious fact that Lungaus's sullen and discontented manner always provoked the doctor to lengthy explanations.

“ Oh, those contraptions ! ” Lungaus retorted promptly and contemptuously. “ Nobody has ever been any the better for them.”

“ All right. Then he is doing it, because he is curious to know how your case will develop. Herr Profet has a certain interest in knowing whether we can cure lead poisoning or not.”

“ You can't. I'm sure of that,” Lungaus declared at once. “ The last time I got it again in four months' time.”

“ Wait and see,” the doctor replied, for he could be just as crusty as Lungaus.

“ Then I certainly shan't go back to the shop. I want to work on the Estate, if you insist on certifying that I'm cured,” Lungaus said. He sat down on the operating chair, as though he knew he had a great deal of time for a comprehensive and refreshing discussion. In his impatience, the doctor kicked the white pail containing the waste swabs.

“ So that's it, is it ? ” he said. “ I see. Now you want to work on the Estate. At other times when we want you people to work on the Estate, we might just as well talk to a lot of mules, and the Raitzolds can walk their legs off trying to find farm labourers. All you people want work in the factory. But after you've been down on your backs with lead in your bones, the way you were three years ago, you want to go and work on the Estate. No. That

won't do. You must go back to the Factory. For me, everything depends upon that."


"No one can force me to go," Lungaus said. Doctor Persenthein jumped up and strode rapidly three times round the chair. He came so close to Lungaus, that Lungaus was frightened and shrank from him.

"Now," said Persenthein. "You just listen to me! I tell you you'll go back to the Factory and you'll keep healthy. You seem to forget the arrangement we made, before I took you into my house. You seem to forget in what condition and where I picked you up. We've got you through; we've cured you; three years of work, no, not of work: three years of life were squandered on your wretched carcase, before it was well enough to think at all, to take care of itself. We've squandered all our money on you, my wife has slaved for you like a dog, we've watched over you, and you've treated us swinishly at times. You've lied to me, so that I've been forced to scrap my notes about your case three times, because you've gone drinking secretly. You've knocked the bottom out of a year's records by your swindling tricks. I'd rather look after a lot of convicts than a man like you, who must live strictly according to rules. And now, when you've been brought to this point, now, when I can really test my experiments, you want to give me the slip. You can't treat me that way, Lungaus——"

Lungaus looked at the doctor. Persenthein was standing against the window-sill, holding on to the wood at his back. He looked almost as though he were holding on to the sill lest he should strike out with his fists. Lungaus felt something, which he did not know, tugging within himself. He did not know that this something was gratitude.

"Well, I don't suppose you wish me any harm," he grumbled, "but don't think it's all joy to eat cow fodder

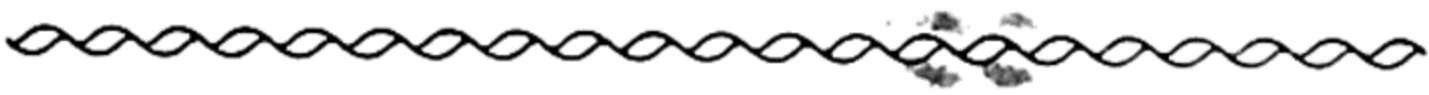




and to be a sort of rabbit used for experiments and to have your blood tested every month, and all that. I've often thought to myself: why didn't I croak right off instead of selling my soul to the doctor? I've often thought——”

Persenthein pushed himself away from the window and turned over the cards with his notes on Lungaus's case. He had found a way. He, Doctor Persenthein, had an Idea, a fundamental, staggering Idea. But he had no means of conducting his experiment. All he had was this one individual, Lungaus, whom he had discovered in a hopeless condition and had induced to submit to having Doctor Persenthein's new method of treatment tested upon his own body under the strictest supervision. He knew his notes about Lungaus by heart. Lungaus was the very essence of his work, his supporting evidence, his triumph. He had rebuilt Lungaus's organism step by step. He had changed and retuned his entire constitution, so that all his innate powers of resistance against the poison and disease had been evoked. Medical discoveries had crystallised round this case of Lungaus. He had been cured not only of lead poisoning, but also of rheumatism, which he had contracted in the trenches, and of an open sore on his foot. There must be a state of absolute health, in which it was quite impossible to contract any illness, and Doctor Persenthein, general practitioner and gynæcologist of Lohwinkel, aspired to nothing less than the discovery of this state of health. This Doctor Persenthein was rather a lonely figure. All he had to go on were a few sentences in Aristotle, and a few opinions, which he had picked up in a much disputed book, *The Crisis of Medicine*. That was all, and then there was Rehle. And finally this troublesome fellow, Lungaus——

“Anyway, people say you are crazy. That's what they say,” Lungaus pronounced into silence. He had looked at



the doctor and thought : " Sometimes his eyes look like a dog's eyes." He meant by this a certain transparent quality in Persenthein's gaze, as he read and summarised the running commentary of his notes. " He is a dog," Lungaus had thought, as he made his unpleasant remark.

" These rabbits——" Doctor Persenthein said contemptuously. This was the generic term which he always applied to the inhabitants of Lohwinkel and the surrounding villages.

" What kind of magic, then, do you think you've done, that the lead won't hurt me any more and my foot will keep cured, and everything ? " Lungaus asked.

Persenthein reverted to his usual laconic style.

" Total change. Alteration of disposition. Understand ? " he said.

" Not a word," Lungaus said.

" Well, my man, just listen. It's true, isn't it, that not everyone contracts lead poisoning ? Why is that ? It's because their predisposition is not ready for it. And everyone doesn't catch T.B., although everyone breathes the bacilli. Understand ? A great many people catch influenza, but not everyone. Rehle doesn't catch it. And you won't catch it now, either. Why ? It all depends upon the predisposition. I can't change the disease, it simply exists and you breathe it in, eat it up, drink it. You absorb it in a thousand ways. But I can change you, it's you I can change, do you understand that ? Human beings can be changed. The predisposition must be changed, that's the point. I haven't completely succeeded in doing this yet ; but there is a way, you wait and see. There is something which Aristotle calls The Perfect Harmony. A human being, who can contract a disease, lacks this perfect harmony. A human being who contracts disease is never really healthy. A really healthy

human being is one who cannot ever become ill. Is all this clear ? ”

Lungaus pondered these remarks. “ Did ye ever see a person like that ? ” he asked, as he hitched up his old trousers. Persenthein, too, pondered.

“ No. Medical men never see really healthy human beings. They don’t even see people who are relatively healthy. That’s where the error in our calculations lies. In the medical schools, four hundred thousand, eight hundred and sixty-two diseases are explained and demonstrated to us. But I’d like to see the professor who takes his students and says to them : ‘ Here is a healthy human being. Please study the symptoms accurately.’ Well, if I were an eminent professor of medicine——”

Persenthein became lost in thought. He was building an absurd, stillborn little castle in the air. For a long time he had been working at a treatise on Lungaus’s case, together with a few relatively conclusive case histories of patients in Obanger, who had, to some extent, followed the complicated diet and regulations which he prescribed. All right. Some day this treatise would be finished. It was to be sent to the universities, to the medical associations. It would be printed. It would create a sensation. Learned heads of the faculty would come to Lohwinkel to investigate his discoveries on the spot. Persenthein could not imagine the presence of learned doctors in Lohwinkel, where goats were driven through the town in the evening and where a duck pond still existed behind the church. But when once he gave way to fantasy, he made a number of famous doctors come to Lohwinkel to investigate and admire his achievements. Then he would be invited to the university. And then——

“ I won’t go back to the Factory. And it’s a dirty shame for you to certify me as fit. It’s a dirty shame, that’s what it is,” Lungaus said.



Persenthein's castle in the air tumbled to pieces, leaving behind a bitter taste of frustrated ambition.

"The air is bad in here," he murmured. "That's all, Lungaus."

Lungaus left the white enamelled ledge of the chair.

"Well?" he asked at the door.

"Well, on Monday you're reporting at the Factory," Doctor Persenthein answered. He could hit hard with his will, when it was necessary.

"All right. Monday, then," Lungaus answered obediently at once, and disappeared quickly. In the hall the doctor's wife was waiting for him with a questioning face.

"How is he?" she asked softly.

"Sharp, mother, pretty sharp," replied the crushed Lungaus.

"You must go and have your bath now, Lungaus, so that we can clean the baths afterwards," Elisabeth said, without taking notice of his remark. It was a bad day, with the message about Jacob Wirz's amputated arm written down on the desk pad——

"Are there no more of these rabbits waiting down below?" Lungaus asked. He had learned from Persenthein to treat the hostility of the Lohwinkel inhabitants with fierce contempt.

"Only two. Now get down with you. Your dinner is ready," Elisabeth said. She pulled herself together and went into the surgery. She had recently acquired the habit of giving herself a little shrug before facing Nick. She herself, however, was unconscious that she did so.

Nick was just wrapping up a microscopic slide to be sent by post to the Institute of Hygiene in Schaffenburg.

"Can I begin to tidy up?" Elisabeth asked as she opened the window.

"Oh—air——" Nick answered absent-mindedly.

There was a detached look in his eyes, and it was obvious that he was not really aware of Elisabeth's presence. He arose, washed his hands and began his regular circular walk round the operating chair. There was a dark expression on his face.

"Tired?" his wife asked, but her question remained unanswered.

"One should really——" Doctor Persenthein said three minutes later with no reference to what had been said before.

"Yes. Shall I telephone to Schroeder?" she asked at once, for she was so at home in his thoughts, that she needed no guide posts.

"I'd give anything not to hear another word about this damned Wirz business," he answered. "Yes, you can call him up," he added a few moments later. Elisabeth had been looking at him. There was pity in her look, and fear that she might be showing her pity. As she began to turn the old-fashioned telephone handle, he took up Jacob Wirz's case history and began to study it, smoking violently as he read.

"When are you going to have your dinner?" she asked, while she was waiting for the toll call to the hospital in Schaffenburg to come through.

"Don't bother about that. I don't care a hang."

Elisabeth carried out a dirty basin. Outside the door she sighed a little and then she came back into the room. Their daily life wasn't very diverting; no, indeed it wasn't, and one could understand why her husband grew impatient. But what does marriage consist of, except these questions: "Are you tired?" "When do you want dinner?" "Why can't you sleep?" These were the eternal, unchangeable questions, which women had asked their men since primæval times. Elisabeth stole a look at Persenthein; her look was questioning, anxious,



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pitying and a little rebellious. To him her look felt like a burden, which he tried to throw off with a little shrug of the shoulders. Elisabeth glanced away at once. She went over to the desk and decided to broach an unpleasant subject.

"Will you go through the household accounts now, Nick?" she asked and her voice sounded guilty.

"Oh, bother!" he said in an irritable voice. Elisabeth closed her mouth tightly and waited. She knew her husband so well, that it was no longer necessary for him to speak to her in explicit sentences.

"No, to-day. To-morrow something else will prevent your going over them. Help me to pay them. I need some money——" she murmured carefully.

"If I had any money, I'd give it to you. It's always money," grumbled the doctor, as he picked up a glass syringe, and proceeded to wash it in ether. The odour of the narcotic caught Elisabeth's nostrils and stuck in her hair.

"What do you need it for?" Persenthein went on to ask.

"I really must pay Markus' bill."

"He can wait. I have to wait, too. Perhaps Herr Profet will finally consent to pay his doctor's bill. Then it will be Markus' turn."

"And I've sent a reminder to the Raitzolds; you remember. In August, you went out to the Estate every day——"

"The Raitzolds haven't any money themselves."

"You seem to have some funny ideas about that Fräulein von Raitzold—she and her brother are never made to pay their bills."

"Funny? Not at all. She is a wonderful person."

"What about her top-boots?"

"Well, what about them? I only wish you wouldn't listen to all this Lohwinkel gossip."

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"Well, they gossip about us too," Elisabeth said dejectedly. Persenthein only grunted. He was keeping his eye on the telephone, as though on an enemy, and waiting.

"So there's no money?" Elisabeth asked. "What on earth shall I say to Markus—it's wretched for me——"

Whenever Persenthein noticed his wife's slight resemblance to Herr Burhenne, her father, the Head Master of the Gymnasium—and this resemblance came to light when she was particularly worried or harassed—he always became impatient. "What a word to use—wretched——" he whispered, and it sounded even more irritable than if he had been shouting. "Wretched!"

"If people knew that we were in debt at the grocer's, it would make your position even more difficult."

"Why should they know? Does the Jew go talking about it? I thought he was to be trusted."

"It isn't necessary for him to say anything. They simply know it, that's all. And they say——"

"What do they say? They say that I'm crazy. They say that I can't tell the difference between catarrh of the stomach and scarlet fever, and that the doctor from the town had to be called in because three of my patients died of influenza. Tell me, what do they say——?"

"They say that Markus lets us have everything more cheaply because he is in love with me. And then I can't even pay my bill. It is wretched."

"Well, then. If he is in love with you, he can wait," Persenthein concluded, suddenly satisfied. Elisabeth swallowed a strange feeling of disappointment. Then she began to laugh.

"You have no proper pride at all," she said, as she walked towards him. There were still moments in which he felt her walk, her coming, her approach and her presence as a joy, as an exhilaration. She noticed at once that his jaw became less set.

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"No, not the slightest," he said, none the less stubbornly.

"Perhaps you might have waited before buying that expensive Pantostat," she said, when she stood close to him, but she smiled as she spoke, for she did not mean it seriously.

"Well, tell that to your Hebraic soul-mate. Tell him that I have invested too much money in my own shop, so that I can't pay the grocery bill for the present. And I shall soon have to have an apparatus for blood transfusions. That's certain. I could have kept Frau Melkin alive—they never call me to Obanger for a thing like that until the women have practically bled to death. I have made a small list of people who are willing to have their blood transfused. It's all neatly arranged according to blood groups, just like in a clinic, and all I need is the apparatus. It wouldn't even cost very much——"

Before Frau Persenthein could express her opinion about the apparatus, the call from Schaffenburg came through. Elisabeth glanced timidly at Persenthein, whose face immediately assumed a mask of indifference. As he took down the receiver, she slipped out of the door.

"Keep quiet, Rehle," she whispered. It was very dark in the hall and she felt, rather than saw, the child's presence there. "Nick is answering a trunk call." She sat down on the bench next to the wall, where the patients usually waited, and drew the child towards her.

"About the man who cut his finger?" Rehle whispered.

"Yes. What do you know about that?" Elisabeth asked, surprised.

"Why, I was with him at the Estate, when he bandaged the finger. First it bled and then it stopped. The man laughed over it, and Nick said: 'He's not such a cry-baby as Rehle.' But I'm not a cry-baby, am I? When

I fell through the window-pane, I only cried because the glass was broken. It didn't hurt so very badly. It would be a shame if the man went and died, wouldn't it?"

"He won't go and die," Elisabeth whispered, bending over Rehle's warm hair. And because it was dark, she allowed herself to touch this warmth with her lips.

"Yes, he may. Nick is afraid he will go dead. Nick told me so," Rehle said aloud, nodding her head energetically.

Under her hands, which she had crossed over the little girl's breast, Elisabeth felt Rehle's living heart beat as though it were a small, fluttering bird. He told you? she thought. He did not tell me. She said nothing. Inside the telephone conversation was still going on, with its monosyllabic questions followed by silences, while the questions were being answered. Upstairs Lungaus was pottering about. Then they heard the doctor pacing violently up and down the surgery. It was impossible to tell whether Rehle was listening or whether she had gone to sleep. The electric pump was working in the basement. Nick's damp jacket, hanging on the clothes-rack, smelled of rain and medical dressings. Everything was dim.

Finally the doctor appeared. He stepped from a grey background into the dark, for behind him it was dusk in the room and in the hall itself it was pitch dark.

"Shall I—Do you want the light?" Elisabeth asked.

"Thanks, I'll find my way. I must make a few more calls," he said disjointedly. She heard him rummaging at the clothes-rack.

"Nick—what is the matter with Wirz?"

"Nothing."

"Nothing?"

"It's all over. He died at four o'clock. He had been dying for three hours, Schroeder told me."



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“ Oh——!” Elisabeth whispered. Rehle did not move, but Elisabeth felt from the stiffening of the little body under her hands that the child was awake and tense with excitement.

“ Well, the Lohwinklers will again have something to say against me,” Doctor Persenthein said into the darkness.

“ But you can’t help it,” Elisabeth whispered.

“ It’s a wretched business,” he answered. He did not notice that he was using the same word “ wretched ” which had irritated him such a short while ago. “ Sometimes I’m so sick of it all——” he went on, and then he groped his way in the dark with his knees and sat down on the patients’ bench. “ Schroeder, too, says that it’s just bad luck. Schroeder himself waited four days before he amputated. There it is. One goes around doing one’s best. If a great hulking fellow like this Wirz slips on a hoe and hurts his finger, no one would think of making much fuss about it. If I’d amputated the whole finger at once—well, naturally nothing could have happened. But damn it, one doesn’t amputate right away. Heaven knows what dirt he must have had on his hand. But there you are ; it’s always easy to be wise after the event. Schroeder says he would have done just as I did—disinfected, bandaged, and that’s all. Who would think of amputating a finger straightaway ? But if I had only done it. Oh, it’s perfectly damnable——”

Elisabeth listened to this monologue in silence. It was not easy to live in Lohwinkel as the wife of a man who met with so much hostility. Now there would be new difficulties. Sometimes she felt that the burdens which had been loaded on her were too heavy, but she trudged along bravely enough. The worst of it was when something within herself secretly took sides against Nick. He was so possessed by his ideas about medicine that he tore

everything into shreds which did not fit into his scheme of things. And his profile was like Schiller's. Probably, because he, too, was a genius, Elisabeth thought. But he did seem to have a great many fatalities in his practice. Elisabeth had moments of depression, when she clearly had doubts about Nick's real vocation for medicine and when she could not understand why this fetish medicine should be demanding so many sacrifices of her. Her hand sought Nick's knee.

"I'd like to know what you really think about me?" he asked dolefully in the darkness; for, like many married couples, they could read each other's thoughts.

"It doesn't matter what I think. I like you, as you know," she said. He noticed the slight hesitation with which she pronounced the word "like" instead of "love." He stretched out his hand in the darkness. It encountered Rehle's little shoulder.

"Why, there's Rehle," he said, and Elisabeth knew, despite the darkness, that he was smiling. "Yes, what you think of me *does* matter. It's all that matters. You are the only one," he said. He spoke loudly and severely, for fear of growing soft, and he swallowed the tender end of his sentence. Elisabeth felt that he was getting up. The next moment he had turned on the light at the switch near the foot of the stairs and disappeared into the shed to get out his motor-cycle.

"Where are you going now?" she asked.

"Two calls in Obanger. Then to Priel, a pneumonia case. Won't pull through either. She's seventy-eight. Then I'll stop at the Raitzolds to tell them about Wirz. And to the Profets—the boy still has fever," Persenthein said as he leaned his motor-cycle against the door of the house. Rehle, who was now silent and thoughtful, fastened the door to its hook. Unlike most children, when there was something in the air she could become

inaudible and invisible. Some fallen leaves blew in a little heap against the doorstep outside. The contours of the Angermann House sank into the dusk.

"What's the matter with Profet's boy?" Elisabeth asked as she stepped into the doorway, and shivering covered her hands with her apron.

"I don't know. He's been feverish since the last football match. A perfectly crazy temperature chart: one moment up, the next moment down. But no symptoms to be found. Very unpleasant. There the boy is, in bed with a temperature, and I don't know what's the matter with him."

"You don't know?" Elisabeth asked.


"No, I don't know. I simply don't know," Doctor Persenthein shouted angrily as he rode away through the Gate.

Elisabeth remained standing apathetically at the door until his offended back had disappeared and the fussy sound from the exhaust of his worn-out motor-cycle floated away in the direction of Obanger.



LOHWINKEL is a little old town in the Rhine province of Hesse with about seven thousand inhabitants, or seven thousand souls, as they say in old-fashioned travel books. Seven thousand souls, that is to say, live and have their being behind the old façaded buildings of Lohwinkel. Lohwinkel possesses an old church with one completed tower and one that has never been finished. There is a City Hall, built in MDCXV and restored in MDCCCCVII. In the City Hall officiates Herr Doktor Ohmann, the progressive mayor. Even his adversaries admit that he is rather a fine fellow. The mayor is progressive ; but others are not, for example Direktor Burhenne, the Head Master of the Gymnasium, who recently celebrated the twenty-fifth anniversary of his appointment. In Lohwinkel, as everywhere else in the world, there are Conservatives and Radicals, poor and rich, progressives and stick-in-the-muds. These groups are mutually antagonistic, and outside these important groups there are only a few individuals such as Doctor Persenthein or the proprietor of the local store, "Salomon Markus' Successor." People know a great deal about each other in a town like Lohwinkel. When, for instance, three of the town dogs sit and howl on the pavement outside the house of Nadler, the ironmonger, the Lohwinklers say ; "Look, Nadler's Inka is on heat again !" Or, when Head Master Burhenne, whom his pupils call "Putex," enters the classroom with a gloomy expression





on his Bismarckian countenance and gives three bad marks for two very slight errors, the boys in the Gymnasium know that "Putex" has had a row with Frau Bartels. Frau Bartels is the Head Master's housekeeper—he was left a widower, when still very young—and she looks after him as well as the two boarders, who usually live on the top floor. As a sort of sideline, Frau Bartels also brought up Elisabeth Burhenne, who later became Frau Persenthein. The whole town knows, too, that since her marriage, Frau Persenthein has not had an easy time of it with that unpopular harum-scarum husband of hers. But even in Lohwinkel people do not know the real truth about each other, and even though the houses within the old Town Wall squat so closely together, the seven thousand souls that live round the fountain in the market-place, on which a little stone Madonna gives to the Child a little stone apple, are actually as far apart as the stars in the firmament above.

In common with most towns, Lohwinkel has removed its sordidness to its east end. In the Middle Ages in front of the Angermann Gate lay the Anger, the common land. The wheel and the gallows stood on this common land, and a part of it was used as a burial ground for those who had died from the plague, but it was also a place where foreigners in those turbulent times were allowed to spend the night during the annual fairs. Now, however, Saint George on the Angermann Gate looked down upon a dusty and badly paved street, which led between broad fences to the working-men's dwellings in the suburb of Obanger. These dwellings were by no means beautiful. They were all more or less alike, built of the same kind of brick, and all of them had been planned—unintentionally perhaps—so that they faced in the direction of the factory, just as all the houses in Lohwinkel faced the church. Behind the factory a third-

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rate country road ran between mountain-ash trees and the fields belonging to the Estate. Four times a day the mail van, which rattled towards the station, drove along this road. Lohwinkel possessed only half a railway station, for the station bore the name of "Lohwinkel-Düsswald," and both towns were about half an hour by road in opposite directions from the station. The road was bad; the heavy trucks, belonging to the factory, had ground deep holes into it, and when a truck, coming from the factory, encountered the mail van, there was always confusion and quarrelling, for the old country road was too narrow to meet such demands of modern traffic. Herr Profet's efforts to construct a side-track to the station were frustrated by the embittered and violent opposition of Herr von Raitzold, who owned the land between the factory and the station. Between these two men there existed a feud, which was a matter of great interest to everyone in Lohwinkel. Their stagnant hatred of each other had really no other cause but the fact that the Raitzolds had lived in the district for centuries, were a part of the very soil, and were now sinking into poverty in an alarming manner; whereas Herr Profet, on the other hand, a stranger and a newcomer, was growing rich, and investing money in all kinds of enterprises; in land, in subsidies to the local savings bank, in the White Swan Inn—to mention only a few of his investments—and increasing his influence in the district with the increasing circulation of his capital.

Not without reason had the rich Herr Profet built his villa—an edifice of somewhat vague architectural design with its turrets, terraces, tennis court and fountain—as far away as possible from the unpleasant Obanger district, and it was situated in the west end of the town, outside the second Gate, in the so-called Priel. For there is a caste system even in a town of seven thousand inhabi-

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tants, and the lines of demarcation are particularly clearly defined. The Priel people have always been considered in Lohwinkel to be very superior; what, in fact, Behrendt, the chemist, would call "Better Class." The name, "Obanger," on the other hand, always had a certain depreciatory meaning; the word was almost an insult, and scrimmages enough occurred in the Gymnasium when one boy called another an "Obanger." Herr Profet's younger son, for instance, had called Kolke, who boarded at the Head Master's, by this name; and for the same reason, there had been a fight between Gurzle, a long-legged boy in the top form, and the son of the poor widow Psamatis. There were continually rows of this sort.

It was a five minutes' walk from the Angermann House to the centre of Lohwinkel. It was the same distance to the church or to the Gymnasium (which, with Burhenne's living quarters, lay at the fork of the main road), or to Heinrich Markus' shop opposite the White Swan. In another five minutes you reached the other end of the town, the West Gate, where the fine maple-avenue of Priel began. Here the air was better, the little gardens of the villas were surrounded with hedges of evergreen and the daughters of successful Priel business men could be seen taking their walks.

Frau Doktor Persenthein never took this five minutes' walk without putting on her hat. It was one of the efforts she made to emphasise the doctor's respectability. Also she never carried a shopping basket; that was all right for the shoemaker's wife or the lawyer's servant girl, but not for the doctor's wife. Instead she carried a little network bag, which could be folded neatly together. This evening, as a matter of fact, this shopping net served merely as a pretext and she walked so slowly towards the centre of the town that it took her almost seven



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minutes to reach Markus' shop. She felt her heart "growing square." That is what she called it to herself, when she felt her heart growing angular and painful within her breast, as though a corner of this square heart was pushing against her left collar-bone. The fact that her husband was a doctor was reason enough to hide from him this little unpleasantness. . . .

On this October day it was almost dark when the church clock struck six. Herr Schmittbold, the street sweeper and watchman, was still busily sweeping the fallen leaves from the puddles near the gutter into little heaps. From time to time he stood still, bending over his broom, to draw breath. A few Lohwinklers, who had stopped work for the day, sat on green painted benches in front of their house doors, their hands folded heavily on their laps. Krainerz, the tailor, was officiously rattling down his shutters. The air was permeated with the characteristic Lohwinkel smell, a never changing smell of street dust, which had been laid by sprinkling, of wood fire and of the decaying duck-weed in the duck pond behind the church. Elisabeth walked slowly, for she was adding up her accounts, and she was carrying all the unpleasant figures from her black household account book with her in her head. She looked down at the tips of her shoes, but she smiled, in her gentle and detached manner, at almost everyone whom she met, for she knew nearly all of them. Behrendt, the chemist, was the only one who stepped back into his shop as she approached. He sold drugs and photographic supplies, and his retreat was in the nature of a slightly hostile demonstration. The Persentheins and Behrendt had completely broken off relations. Persen-thein went wild with rage whenever Behrendt gave private advice and sold ready-made medicines, thus thwarting the doctor's contemplated medical reforms. Behrendt, on the other hand, claimed that the doctor was



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wilfully ruining his business with his crazy natural remedies. They had exchanged involved, polite, but bitter letters, and this correspondence had only resulted in open hostility. Behrendt was the President of the Universal Brotherhood Association ; he was in a position to harm Persenthein, and he did so. Now, therefore, he stepped back into his chemist's shop so as not to be obliged to bow to Frau Persenthein. She hesitated for a moment at the fork of the main road and the market street, considering whether she should simply beard the offended lion in his den and resume relations with him by purchasing something—camomile tea, shampoo powder, or a tube of vaseline—or whether she should take flight. Finally, she turned round, as though she had forgotten something important, walked away from the unfriendly Main Road and retired into Market Street.

“What can I do for you ?” asked Herr Markus, as the fugitive entered his shop. There were two other customers in front of her : one was the lawyer's cook and the other was Fräulein Ritting, the milliner from the Wassergasse. Herr Markus handed a half-filled paper bag to his clerk, and pushed his way along the counter, so that he could wait on Elisabeth. He was short-sighted, which gave him a perpetual look of interrogation and surprise, but he did not wear glasses in the shop. The reason why he never wore glasses in the shop was similar to Elisabeth's reason for always wearing a hat. Horn-rimmed glasses were out of place in the shop ; they belonged to the books and periodicals in his flat upstairs. Glasses would have made his customers distrustful and inclined to ridicule him. “What can I do for you ?” he asked, but he did not shake hands with Elisabeth, for in the shop he never felt that he was really clean.

“A pound of rice, please.”

“Unhusked, of course ?”

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"Of course," Elisabeth said and began to smile.

"I've got a whole sack of it especially for you," he said, responding to her smile.

"And for our patients."

"Beg pardon? Yes, of course. But they like to get out of eating it."

As Elisabeth watched the grains of rice gliding smoothly into the bag, she felt a pleasant sense of peace. There was such a delightful smell in Markus' shop: it smelt of her childhood and of the acid-drops she had been given as a child.

"Anything else?"

"No, thank you."

"That will be thirty-eight pfennigs—I'll put it down to the monthly account," Markus added a moment later, when he noticed Elisabeth's slight hesitation.

"Yes, please," she said as she slipped the packet of rice into her net-bag.

"Good evening, Frau Doktor," said Fräulein Ritting, the milliner.

"Good evening, Fräulein Ritting. It has just begun to rain," Frau Persenthein answered. She had come to be grateful to everyone who had no cause to bear the doctor malice. Fräulein Ritting had been successfully brought through an attack of pleurisy——

"I'd like to speak to you a moment, Herr Markus," she said after the milliner had disappeared outside. The rain, which was just beginning to fall, was splashing gently against the coloured glass door of the shop.

"Yes, but let's talk in my office," Herr Markus said. He glanced at his wrist watch and gave his clerk orders to close the shop. Elisabeth followed him behind the counter into the little glass-fronted office, which was full of fragrant sacks of coffee. She held her shopping net firmly in both hands and went straight to the point.

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“It’s already the twelfth of October, Herr Markus,” she said.

“Oh, is it? Yes, so it is. The twelfth, already,” Herr Markus answered, visibly embarrassed as he put on his glasses and looked at the calendar on the wall. He had an attractive mouth, which easily became helpless and found difficulty in forming the initial consonants of certain words. His hair was dark, but round his forehead it had a curiously golden glint. Elisabeth kept her eyes on this glint firmly as she continued her explanations.

“I can’t pay our bill yet, Herr Markus.”

“Oh, that is—too bad!—I mean—I sent it only as a matter of form—you know how it is—my mother is so particular——” Markus stammered. He gave the impression of being a debtor instead of a creditor.

“People are so unpunctual, we have so many outstanding accounts ourselves——” Elisabeth said. She was growing more and more embarrassed.

“Yes, I know how it is—it’s the same in my business. I have to pay promptly for my goods, but my customers never seem to be in a hurry——”

Now that their talk had floundered to this point, neither of them knew what to say next, and just at this worst possible moment Elisabeth’s eyes filled with the tears which she had smiled away into herself since morning. Probably it was because she was sitting still for the first time during the day, and also because she felt a little sorry for Markus.

“It makes me feel so wretched,” she whispered.

“Oh—as far as I am concerned—it doesn’t really matter,” said Herr Markus, although his mother daily made the most appalling rows about the Persentheins’ unpaid account——

“I am so sorry to hear that you have financial worries, Frau Doktor,” he said finally. It would not do for him to



express his feelings for this woman in any more passionate way. Elisabeth understood him perfectly, and this knowledge filled her with a mixture of pleasant and unpleasant emotions.

"You are always so nice, Herr Markus," she said gratefully.

Herr Markus, S. Markus' Successor, was an outsider, just as Doctor Persenthein was an outsider. In the first place, though he had been born in Lohwinkel, he was a Jew. "I'm going to the Jew's," people would say in Lohwinkel, instead of saying "I'm going shopping," or "I'm going to Markus's." He had been a lonely child, and as a schoolboy he had frightened his teachers, particularly the pedantic Head Master Burhenne, by his impatient mind, which forged ahead of the school curriculum, and by his quickly changing enthusiasms for every kind of knowledge. After he had passed through the Gymnasium he went to Berlin to study law and to make his way in the world. Then came the trouble with his father, Herr S. Markus, in which Doctor Persenthein was somewhat involved. S. Markus had had a stroke, quite unexpectedly—as such things happen—one evening just as he was eating cold, peppered yellow peas with a glass of the excellent local wine. Frau Markus sent for Doctor Persenthein, but Doctor Persenthein was not at home. Following directions left on the notice-board outside his house he was found an hour later on the Estate, where one of the farm girls, with great trouble and suffering, was being delivered of an illegitimate child. He stayed with the girl until the child was born, and not until then did he trudge wearily back to Lohwinkel, for the motor-cycle was not purchased until after this experience, and Herr von Raitzold, who was a fanatical anti-semite, had refused to lend the doctor his carriage. So Herr S. Markus died without medical help, just as he would surely have died with it.



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Since that night, however, old Frau Markus' secret hatred had clung to Doctor Persenthein, also there had clung to him an evil reputation for being unreliable and never to be found when he was badly needed. And, furthermore, there was something that was difficult to express; it was as though he had openly sided with Immorality and had preferred to attend disreputable individuals rather than honourable, even though Hebraic, fellow-citizens.

Even more serious were the consequences of his father's stroke for young Markus pursuing his legal studies in Berlin. He was obliged to give up his university career in order to take over the shop. He was forced to return to Lohwinkel, to his mother, to the smell of soap and coffee which permeated the shop in the Market Street. There he now sat and tried to rearrange his life. He introduced innovations. He had "Warehouse" painted over the door, and the decorations in his shop window were often so modern as to be almost offensive. In his private life he wore glasses. He bought a great many books; read catalogues and subscribed to a mass of periodicals. He rigged up an exceptionally good wireless set, on which he could hear not only his beloved Berlin, but also Paris, London and Rome. And he conducted a strange and extensive correspondence. He wrote letters, innumerable letters, to all parts of the world, and sometimes, too, he received a letter. He clung to the great world outside, dragging the world into his small, gloomy office, where the sacks of coffee were kept. . . .

"One must not let oneself go. One must cling to one's idealism, Frau Doktor," he said, stuttering over his consonants. Elisabeth looked at him attentively, but that big word Idealism chilled her. She nibbled at her finger for a moment.

"Oh, Markus—sometimes I don't know what to do," she said softly.

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"I know. Your life isn't an easy one, either," Markus replied, and it was strange that he should happen to use the same words as Lungaus. People in Lohwinkel often said that Frau Doktor Persenthein had not an easy time, and this strengthened the general antipathy towards her husband. Feeling a need for comfort, she looked at Heinrich Markus' inkstained, clerkly hand, which, unconsciously, he was pushing towards her along the inkstained desk.

"My husband——" she began querulously, and then she smiled.

"I know——" Markus answered discreetly.

"It's only because he has so much to worry about. And things get worse and worse. I feel so sorry for him. Then he is—a little unkind—I feel so sorry for him. And every day there are worries and these discussions about money. I must really——"

"But the doctor has a good practice now. I should judge that he earns——" said S. Markus' Successor, changing suddenly into a business man.

"He earns money, but he spends it again at once. That's just the trouble. There is always some new equipment to be bought, such expensive things, apparatus and books and periodicals, and then he thinks about new instruments which he wants to invent and improve. He orders such strange things, and we ourselves never have enough to get on with. He always wants to improve and improve his equipment. He doesn't want to become a sleepy country doctor, like my uncle. I understand him very well, but it's so difficult——"

"The doctor is an ambitious man. He's really——"

"Ambitious, yes. No, that's not quite it. You know, Herr Markus, he is by nature a discontented man, that's what it is. He lives in a quiet place, that is true. But he would never really be contented, that I know, and if he—

oh, he might be practising anywhere, but he would still be discontented."

"You ought to thank God for that. He belongs to the living. Here everyone is dead. They are all dead, finished. Nothing ever changes, nothing happens. That's why it's so damned dangerous to live here: one might grow quiet and resigned oneself. How do you feel about all this, Frau Doktor? Wouldn't you, too, like to get away from it all, leave everything, only to get away, far, far away, anywhere, only to get away? Here everything seems so final, so irrevocable. Don't you yourself ever feel like chucking it all up and running away?"

As she regarded him attentively, Elisabeth looked more like five-year-old Rehle than ever. Then, considering for a moment what he had said, she nodded her head.

"But, of course, one can't really do it," she said sensibly.

"No, one can't do it," Markus, too, repeated.

"How hard it's raining," she said, and listened. Nick's stockings will be wet through when he gets home; I must darn another pair for to-morrow, she thought.

"Why not?" asked Markus suddenly. He jumped to his feet. "Why can't one? Why can't one go off and get right away from all this? One only thinks one can't do it, when one is living in Lohwinkel. Here everything is at a deadlock. Outside the world looks quite different. One reads, one hears about things—everything is now in a state of flux, values are changing—here we live as though we were walled in. Here everything becomes so barren, our loves and our hates—and so irrevocable——"

Elisabeth drew back her shoulders, almost imperceptibly. She did not like words of this kind: love, hate and flight. They smacked of the books, which this disappointed student, Markus, read in masses, so that they made him high flown, odd, and clever in this curious



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Jewish way. "It's not as serious as all that," she said naïvely. In the meantime his eyes behind his glasses had grown somewhat sad, for he was thinking: "If only I had met you somewhere else, we could have made a different life for ourselves, Elisabeth. Barren love. Here you are the physician's wife and I am the Jewish grocer, S. Markus' Successor. That's all there is to it. Finis. Full stop. Unhusked rice as a homage. Unpaid bills as a token of thanks. You don't know anything, you don't know anything at all about me——"

"I must go now. Rehle is alone at home," she said, but she did not get up, for she was tired and incapable of making any decisive move.

"Just a moment, just a moment," he said hastily. "Let me explain what I mean. There is, for example, the young lady at the hairdresser's. She came to Lohwinkel from some large city or other. God knows what cast her adrift here. She knows all about her business. She can manicure, and wave hair. She is a bit made-up, well, that's all right—don't be impatient, Frau Doktor, listen to what I want to say. This young lady has had a bad reputation right from the start. Why? Because she rouges her lips? Because she has been seen going about with the son of Seyfried, the butcher? Who can forbid her going out with him, who can take this amiss? Then she is seen with others, with me, with a post office official? Well, what happens? It's all over for her. She's done-for, once and for all. She'll never be able to patch up her reputation. She'll never find a husband, she'll never be able to do anything but go out with a different person every Sunday and to be forced to listen to the remarkable conversation of her male customers during the week. Prostitution in Lohwinkel? Well, that's what it comes to. Anywhere else, this young lady would have remained a nice young girl; here with us—excuse me, Frau



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Doktor, I know you don't like to hear these things. That is because you are a Catholic ; that makes you stiff——”

“ And it's because you're a Jew, that you let your tongue run away with you,” thought Elisabeth, up in arms at once, for she often had these flashes. However, she did not voice her thought, because she felt that the word “ Jew ” could never be anything but an insult.

“ It's better to be stiff than loose,” was all she said. Markus began to laugh. He had understood her very well, though not without experiencing a sharp pain, a kind of neuralgia, from which he had always suffered, even as a child, when he found himself isolated by his faith.

“ All right. Let's take another subject—Politics. Does anything ever happen here politically ? Do all our election brawls, or all the harangues in the *Anzeiger* on the one side, or in the *Schaffenburger Volksblatt* on the other, ever lead to anything ? Do you ever find anyone converted by these harangues ? In Obanger they're Socialists, in Lohwinkel they're Conservatives. Herr von Raitzold would like to shoot everyone who differs from him, and Herr Profet pursues a middle-class Liberal course and, meanwhile, screws as much as he can out of his workpeople. Will the workers ever rise in revolt ? Not a bit of it ! Things will remain just as they are. People get lead poisoning—your uncle always hushed it up, and now your husband has exposed it, has alarmed the factory inspector, and agitated the Health Insurance Society. And what has been the result ? Nothing, absolutely nothing. Our worthy fellow-citizens consider him a Socialist. And the workers call him a quack, because he prescribes milk and air, instead of medicines. If people in Lohwinkel weren't so entirely passive, they would by this time have brought in another doctor——”

“ Yes, that's what I'm always afraid of,” Elisabeth said quickly. “ That's just it. Supposing, after Fräulein

Ohmann is married, her future husband were to start a practice here? Just think of it. He the mayor's son-in-law, and my husband so unpopular——”

“ You're afraid of that, are you ? ” Markus repeated, hesitating a moment. “ No, it won't happen. Nothing ever happens here. Everyone has enemies, but they don't ever do anything, they only disturb one's life, one's very breath. Enemies ! Look at an enmity like that between Herr von Raitzold and Herr Profet. It is simply screaming for some sort of outlet, something simply must happen, murder, manslaughter, burning down the Estate, blowing up the factory. But what actually happens ? Nothing at all. They are enemies. And that's all there is to it. There are holes in the road, every month something or other unpleasant happens to motor-cars. And what is done about it ? The holes remain. The holes in a Lohwinkel road are unchangeable. The regulation against smoking among the boys at the Gymnasium, which your father passed twenty years ago, is still in force. Even when I was in the top form we wanted to make a row about it. But will the boys ever make a row ? No. Will our friend the chemist, Herr Behrendt, ever bow to you again ? No. Will Frau Bürgermeister Ohmann ever have a dress made by Fräulein Ritting again, since she made a mess of that green silk dress eight years ago ? No. Events never occur here. Nothing moves. When one looks out of the window it's a surprise to find that we actually have electric standards instead of miserable oil lamps——”

An electric street standard was actually shining just outside the high, rain-splashed office window. Elisabeth looked gently up at the light, for the drops shimmered so prettily as they trickled down. She had not been following the last ironical turn of Markus' long speech very attentively ; she had grown drowsy with that soft bell-like humming in the ears, which frail, tired people, who

are a little anæmic, often feel when they begin to be sleepy. Markus turned away from the street light and the miseries of Lohwinkel towards her face. He looked at her for a moment and then said quickly, stumbling over the first consonant, which was a little difficult for him: "Sh-should we have a little music again, Frau Doktor?"

"Oh, yes," she said absently, without glancing away from the street standard.

"Th-this evening? Our Brahms Sonata? We've always wanted to play it through——" he said quickly.

"This evening? No, I couldn't manage that."

"Why?"

"Oh—well, because—the doctor will be nervous—the doctor won't be able to stand having music in the house this evening—he's had a death among his patients——"

Markus wondered for a moment why it was that Frau Persenthein always spoke of her husband as the "doctor," as though she were still a nurse in the children's ward in the hospital at Schaffenburg. Markus occasionally pondered over the Persentheins' marriage, but he never came to any clear or tenable conclusions.

"All right, then we won't have any music. No Brahms Sonata," he said. "It's too bad. It would have been just the evening for it, rainy and a little gloomy. Would you like something to read? You haven't seen the October magazines. Or a nice new novel—we can choose something——"

"Yes, I'd like to read," Elisabeth said, and now she turned her gaze away from the street light, and looked at Markus.

"I can't find time for reading," she said, suddenly recollecting. "I must still do the washing this evening."

"But, good heavens! Frau Doktor, every time I see you, you have to do the washing. What kind of a secret vice is this of yours?"



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“ You call that a vice ! The doctor needs such a lot of clean linen for his practice, you know—and we haven’t so very much. So the washing must be done every other evening, clothes, towels, overalls, and so on. There you have the secret,” Frau Persenthein said, and her voice was brighter. The thought of the Brahms Sonata and the lovely novels had made her somewhat depressed and wistful, but now she clearly visualised the wooden bin with the soaking laundry down in the basement, she almost smelled the yellow soap, and she revived. “ I must go home,” she said, rising and putting on her hat, which she had been holding in her hand. Herr Markus shyly watched the smooth, light brown hair disappear under the felt brim. Frau Persenthein’s face radiated purity and candour, and her clear-cut features gladdened the heart of Herr Markus. He assumed, by the way, that this Doctor Persenthein did not know at all what his wife looked like. All the better, Herr Markus thought jealously, while Frau Persenthein took up her shopping net and held out her hand.

“ Well, then, many thanks—for everything—and in a few days—as soon as the Raitzolds remember our bill ——” she said awkwardly. Markus, too, was embarrassed. “ Oh—don’t mention it—come through the vestibule, the shop is quite dark,” he said. Elisabeth stumbled after him, down three or four steps, where it smelt of fresh paint. Outside the rain was as dense as a Japanese bead curtain and the raindrops plashed up in tiny silver fountains when they fell into a puddle.

“ My goodness—— ! ” cried Elisabeth in consternation, for she thought of Nick on his motor-cycle.

“ Just a moment—Frau Doktor—I must show you something——” Markus said from behind her, and she remained standing, grateful for the delay.



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“This is it—I have received a wonderful letter. Yes, he has answered my letter.”

“Answered? Who has answered?”

“R-Romain Rolland,” he said secretively, preparing himself well for the alliteration in the first consonants. “You know—I asked for an autograph: he has sent it. I must show it to you——”

“Impossible—Romain Rolland——” she whispered, growing just as secretive. Very clearly she felt, as she stood there in the dark vestibule of Markus’ shop, that the arrival of such a letter in Lohwinkel was indeed an extraordinary and almost incredible occurrence. She gladly stumbled up the stairs behind Markus. The church clock, in the meantime, was slowly striking seven and urging her to leave.

As Markus opened the door to the living-room, he stood still for a moment. “Sorry, mother,” he said a little timidly.

Inside, the room smelt of polishing-wax and leavened bread. The table was covered with a damask tablecloth, which shimmered almost like silver, and on it stood two old-fashioned silver candlesticks with burning candles. In a dish, in the centre of the table, there was a loaf of white bread, which was formed into a large twist, and between the bread and the candlesticks lay an open prayer book with Hebrew letters. Old Frau Markus, dressed in a black silk dress, stood at the end of the table; she was muttering and swaying backwards and forwards as she held her hands in a blessing over the flaming candles, so that they became translucent with their aged pallor and high blue veins.

All this seemed strange to Elisabeth, but the atmosphere in the room was festive and cheerful, so she smiled innocently into the crack of the door, as though she were smiling at a lighted Christmas tree, until suddenly a

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cold look from the praying old woman made her turn back.

"Don't bother—I'll look at the letter another time—good night——" she whispered to Markus, somewhat intimidated, as she turned round and disappeared quickly down the stairs.

"I forgot it was Friday evening," Markus murmured after her a little uncertainly.


Without interrupting her prayer and her blessing, the old woman inside the room turned her suspicious eyes towards the whispering at the slightly opened door. She motioned to Markus, with a movement of her head, that he was to come to her. He approached, kissed his flatly extended fingers and then placed them against his mother's wrinkled cheek. As he did so, he had a strange feeling of home and also of utter loneliness, a feeling for which he could find no name.

The street, into which Elisabeth stepped, was quite deserted, although the heavy rain had only lasted for a few moments and it was now falling with a thin, regular splash in sparkling drops.

Across the street, in the White Swan, the rooms were already lighted behind their curtained windows, and smoke was creeping out of the ventilators and drifting past the street lamps. You could hear the orchestra playing inside.

Elisabeth had a feeling of strange repose as she left the Jewish household, and suddenly felt a desire to go into the church. She found the side door by the chancel still open, the church empty, and the candles in front of the Madonna on the side altar burning gently. Her hands were wet and cold from the rain, and the Holy Water in the old stone font seemed warm as she touched it with the tips of her fingers.

She knelt for a passing moment, repeated the Lord's



Prayer and the "Hail Mary"; but all the time her thoughts went their own way. "If only Nick would not——" she thought.

She was afraid, she did not know why; she wished for something she did not know, and she longed for something she could not name. . . .



A MOTOR-CAR was speeding along the road from Dösswald to Lohwinkel. This route was not by any means chosen purposely. The car was coming from Berlin on its way to Baden-Baden; but twenty-eight kilometres from Dösswald a board with three dots had been encountered, which meant that the road was barred; and so, following the red arrow which indicated a turning on to the Dösswald road, the motor-car had jolted through the sleepy town of Dösswald and was now approaching the sleepy town of Lohwinkel.

In this big, open car with its long, light grey body, which was so low that it seemed almost to touch the road, sat four people. At the wheel was Peter Karbon, half-tense and half-tired out with the colourless fine dust from the road in his eyebrows and eyelashes. His red hair, too, which receded sharply from his forehead, was also powdered with light dust, and waved in the strong breeze caused by the speed of the car. By the way, both the owner of the car and its tyres bore the same name. "Karbon's tyres are the best" was a well-known advertisement, which flew past, on light red posters, at all railway bridges, road crossings and signposts, and Karbon's Rubber Factory was one of the salient features of the German industrial world. This Peter Karbon—his age was uncertain, but he was certainly over forty—in his dust-coloured leather motoring kit, gave you immediately an impression of tremendous forcefulness, and he also

gave a curious impression of nakedness. Animals at pasture sometimes look like that, or dogs without a collar, or untamed horses. With Peter it was because his collarless neck rose straight and brick red from his jacket and because he had pushed back his sleeves, on their elastics, to his elbows, so that his arms were bare, even though it was cold. Next to him sat Leore Lania, the actress, who was small and fragile and dead tired, so tired that she grew smaller and smaller with every passing moment. Her costume looked like the offspring of Peter's kit; her little knitted orange-coloured silk cap fitted tight on her small head, and she wore dust goggles, which were the cause of daily quarrels between her and Peter. Peter grumbled, because he considered goggles effeminate and pampering; it irritated him that Leore saw only snatches of the landscape in darkened and subdued colours. He himself, as Leore expressed it, was omnivorant. He gulped in as much as he could with every breath; Life, Women, Things, Animals, Sounds, Colours, Battles, Defeat (yes, even from defeat and suffering he derived a kind of penetrating enjoyment) and Success. So much for Peter Karbon. He deeply resented Leore's goggles, furthermore, because he wanted to see her face, and also because her whole face was tanned by the wind, except for two light mask-like circles round her eyes, where the goggles covered her delicate skin.

"Do I look awful?" Leore would ask hourly; and Peter would answer at once: "Absolutely awful, Pretty." It should here be mentioned that Leore was considered one of the most beautiful women in the world, because of her bird-like grace, the charm due to her mixed race, her lovely colouring with its contrast of shining black and rich golden pallor. Since Peter had been Leore's acknowledged lover, for eighteen weeks and four days to be exact, he had been called Pete, and

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she was called Pretty, whenever he wanted to tease her.

She had been called by many names of endearment in the course of the twenty-four years of her life. She changed her names, as she did her clothes or her rôles. No one ever really knew her. Probably there was, *au fond*, a deep and delicate weakness, which was covered over with a tempestuous ambition. For instance, Leore wore her goggles because the Jupiter lights of the film studio had ruined her eyes. She suffered considerable pain and discomfort from them ; frequently her inflamed lids burned and watered so badly, that she could not sleep. The constant use of nitrate of silver drops became one of the torments of her life, but it was inconceivable that this Leore Lania, this Pretty, would ever have mentioned or admitted this fact. Once a year she broke down with a really dangerous illness, like a horse in harness, during a film production in the studio—without anyone having suspected before that she was ill. Between these attacks she worked, on an average, fifteen hours a day, slept three hours, wept for one hour between two and six in the morning and behaved to all intents and purposes as though she were a small, fragile toy. For such toys were greatly in demand ; it was not a propitious moment in the film market for serious, full-grown women. So now Karbon, who knew her better than she guessed, had persuaded her to take a ten days' rest after her last great effort—the gigantic film "Streets by Night" and the gastric hæmorrhage which had followed it. And now she sat next to this good-natured Pete, driving along the Dösswald road with its deep holes, and uttered little cries of distress.

In the back seat were two other people. Fobianke, the chauffeur, an elderly man with a moustache and the trusty eyes of a policeman, sat with a map on the knees of



his grey tweed suit, and, muttering to himself, added up the increased mileage due to the circuitous route they had taken. The other person was an ornamental young man with the face of a pretty and somewhat surprised girl. He was Franz Albert, the German middle-weight boxing champion.

"Let her out, Pete, let her rip!" Leore said, as soon as they had left the pavements of Düsselwald behind and were on the open country road. Pete, who was letting the car run gently, accelerated slightly, hardly enough to make a speed of forty kilometres an hour.

"What's the matter with you?" Leore asked.

"Oh, the mountain ash," replied Pete, sniffing the sharp, fiery-red autumn air of the road, on which the tufted tree tops flew by like pennants.

"Mountain ash, indeed! I'm cold!" Pretty moaned, rubbing her chin against the knitted woollen border of her jumper. Karbon looked down at her sideways and laughed. "Nose red?" she asked with concern.—"Bright vermilion," he affirmed, as he dodged a cow, which had taken up her position right across the road.

"We ought to be coming soon to a level crossing," Fobianke announced from the back seat. Karbon peered ahead and nodded. It was difficult to see ahead and he tried to drive gently over the holes so as not to give Leore a headache.

"This crawling along drives me crazy," she grumbled in a low voice. "Your Pretty is freezing." Karbon took a firmer hold of the steering wheel and accelerated, so that the car shot ahead and it became colder than ever.

The car hopped over the holes, so that Leore shot up from her seat, shouting softly with joy.

"Is Albert frightened?" Karbon called out without turning round or moving his eyes from the road.

"Albert is asleep," Leore shouted back. They were

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driving uphill in second, and the noise of the engine was loud.

"Wake him up!" shouted Pete.

Leore turned round. The wind whistled hard and cold against her cheek. Albert had really been asleep, but he awoke at once when she looked at him and smiled foolishly. Leore, too, smiled as though she had performed a successful experiment. She liked to think that her will-power accomplished little conjuring tricks of this kind. And as far as Albert was concerned there was a little more in it than met the eye. . . .

"Are we almost there," Albert asked.

"Yes, yes, yes," sang Leore, like a children's nurse. "Does our little one want to go to bed."

"I? Oh—no——" Albert said lazily, but his eyes closed again. Leore, her head turned right round, was watching this performance closely. Albert had blue, deep-set eyes and exceedingly long black eyelashes. The fact that his eyelashes on the lower lids were just as thick and long as the ones on the upper lids, gave him the angelic expression of a new-born babe. Albert rolled his shoulders in his grey wool sweater like a cat. He was incredibly graceful and supple in his every movement. The sporting press particularly praised his Straight Left and his Heart (which is the technical expression for endurance, courage and insensibility to pain). Leore, who had seen him boxing twice, could never think of his self-possessed fury during a fight, and of the totally different expression on the face of this boy, who changed his personality completely as soon as he stood in the ring, without feeling a hot pang in the region of her heart. The fact that Albert was guarded by a tyrannical manager and kept away from all women, was quite enough to make her resolve forthwith to capture this twenty-one-year-old Franz Albert.

The car, in the meantime, was bumping about like mad, and the wheel shook in Karbon's hands. Suddenly the brakes shrieked, and Leore fell forward.

"Shall I drive?" Fobianke asked, involuntarily making a motion to help, but the car was already standing still. Karbon only grinned.

"That's the level crossing," he said, motioning with his chin to the narrow-gauge lines which were only half a metre from the radiator.

"Pete, that was a bit of luck!" Pretty pronounced, as, at that very moment, the little locomotive, with an accusing tinkle from its danger bell, puffed past them at a considerable speed.

"I'm scared," Franz complained gently in the background.

"You're our pet. Isn't he our pet, Pete?" Leore asked, stretching out her hand towards the back of the car, while Karbon drove on again. He crossed the railway lines carefully, and then plunged quite recklessly into the forest, which began on the other side of the railway. Franz Albert, in the meantime, was thoughtfully considering the hand which was offered to him, but he could not decide what to do with it. In a few moments Pretty withdrew this superfluous object and put it away in the warm pocket of Pete's coat.

"If you tickle me, I shall drive into the ditch," Pete murmured threateningly.

"I'm not tickling you. I'm only making myself a little nest," Leore answered peacefully.

Fobianke folded up the map. "Don't you want me to drive for a bit, Herr Karbon?" he asked. "You've done at least three hundred kilometres——"

"Well—what of it?"

"I only thought that Herr Karbon's nerves might be tired."



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“What rot! Tired, indeed!” was all Karbon said, as he accelerated to ninety.

Fobianke's face assumed a sullen expression. He did not like Herr Karbon to put on airs about his hardness. He, Fobianke, would have been tired after driving three hundred kilometres without interruption. Anyone who took his profession seriously must be tired by so long a drive. Besides, Fobianke knew perfectly well that Herr Karbon had driven long enough. He knew it by the gait of the car, by the sharp way the corners were taken, by an indefinable something which he felt as they tore along. Since the lady and the other gentleman had joined them in the car, Fobianke had been depressed by a strange feeling; it was as though they were on a forbidden jaunt with some girls. There was something in the air between these three, Fobianke felt, chiefly from the nervous manner of the driving. When a good driver like Herr Karbon ground his gears that way, something must be wrong.

“What's the matter?” Leore shouted, when once again the brakes screeched. The car stopped and she was flung forward.

“Children! Look! The sun!” Pete yelled excitedly and pointed to the right. Here the forest had been cleared in a strip of about eight yards, the glade sloped down-hill, and below, through this opening, appeared a blue valley—perhaps the Rhine Valley. The leaves of the birch trees on the outskirts of the forest burned bright gold, the ground seemed to flow down to the valley like molten copper, and, on the other side, the sun was setting as riotously as at sea. It was dark red, with regular old-fashioned rays, and as it was setting behind a mist, it was distorted into an ellipse of glittering, glowing and swimming refractions. Karbon was staring open-mouthed at the sight; he did more, he put the car into



reverse and drove backwards a few yards, so as to get a better view.

Leore glanced casually at this splendour, then she looked back attentively at Franz Albert, who had opened his eyes. The men's faces glowed red in the sunset.

"Is our little man enjoying it?" Leore asked.

"Yes," the boxer answered. "It looks nice." His vocabulary and his expressions were those of a child of ten, and he had to manage with them as best he could.

For some reason or other, Leore became furious and she lapsed into the film jargon which she hated.

"I'm fed up with sunsets. It's like a rotten back scene," she said. "I wish we were safely in Baden-Baden."

Pete pretended to be deaf and waited stubbornly for the sun to go down, which it did in a few moments when the red suddenly turned green-blue and it grew cold. Then he drove on so fast that Leore lost her breath. She stuck it out, even though it was uncomfortable, and glanced at her lover's tense profile, as he bent over the wheel, like a race-track driver, setting his forehead firmly against the fast-falling dusk. There was something strange about him: his mouth had almost perfect beauty, as though it had been made from two arched wings. Not bad, Leore thought, but at the same time she raised her upper lip ironically. She knew too much about this Pete. She had known him too well and too long: for eighteen weeks. His red hair and his Roman emperor's face were only a bluff.

"I feel so sorry for you," she said suddenly in her deep and tremulous voice, which was like a little girl's.

"Us? Who? Why?" Karbon asked.

"You. All of you. None of you are good for anything——" declared Pretty, summing up her opinion of men in general.

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“Thank you. Very kind of you to say so,” Pete muttered, as he tore past the small station of Lohwinkel-Düsswald.

“There was a signpost there,” Fobianke announced, but Karbon only shook his head, and it was left far behind. The road became worse than ever. Fobianke took out the map and examined it under his pocket lamp, for under a deep, black cloud it had suddenly turned quite dark. Almost immediately it began to rain. The rain came down in sheets on the car lights. Franz Albert quickly put on his mackintosh. Leore, too, crawled into hers. She had quite definitely had enough of it for one day. “What time is it? How much farther do you want to go on? I wish I were back in Berlin,” she grumbled reproachfully into her turned-up camel-hair collar, but little of what she said could be heard. The road went uphill, it was so steep that Peter Karbon went into second, and finally, cursing, into first gear. On such a hill speed was out of the question.

“Shall I put up the hood?” asked Fobianke, who was feeling depressed by the growing discomfort.

“That would be the last straw. That would take ages to do. I’ll crawl under the rug,” Leore said. Pete stopped the car. Many drives together had caused them to establish certain definite habits. When it began to rain, Fobianke took the wheel, Pete took the back seat, Leore snuggled up to him, and then the large waterproof rug was spread over the idyllic pair.

“Look, Pretty, those are vineyards,” Karbon said. He had got out of the car to change places with Fobianke; Leore, too, crawled out and stretched herself a little, but she did not look at the vineyards. Nettles on the side of this absurdly narrow road smelt strong and acrid in the rain. From the car glared huge beams of light, which blinded one, and pressed everything else into

an even blacker darkness. Leore felt herself offered in martyrdom to this unfortunate evening and was terribly homesick for Berlin. She thought of Schwannecke's restaurant, the Eden Bar, the Rot-Weiss Club, the Wellenbad, the whirlpool of traffic round the Gedächtniskirche——.

"I'd like to go to sleep," she implored Peter Karbon, who was stretching his legs by the roadside, for they felt very stiff in the knees.

"Come along, my midget," he said. There was tenderness in his voice. He put his hand under her sleeve. "Our little boxer must sit in front, he will be protected by the wind-screen," he said politely, waiting for the boxer to understand what he had said.

Suddenly Leore withdrew her arm and pushed Peter's hand away.

"No, you stay in front, I want to sleep with Franz," she said unexpectedly.

Pete closed his lips very firmly. All right, he thought. God forbid that he should say anything. He simply crawled into the front seat next to Fobianke, who started the car up at once, and let those two at the back make whatever arrangements with the rug they thought fit.

One cannot say whether Leore Lania was in love with the young boxer or not. It was not as simple as all that. Her emotions were more complicated; they were composed of many layers and glittered with many colours. Only one thing was certain. For a few weeks a nervous hunger had taken possession of her, and to-day this hunger had increased almost beyond endurance, to move closer to Franz, to feel his warmth, to feel the way his ribs expanded and contracted in response to his disciplined breathing; to absorb something of the animal-like chastity of this body, and—if possible—to lure out that other strange face, that fighting face. She sighed deeply



as she rested her cheek against the rough material of his coat under the motor-rug. She had taken off her cap and her glasses, she was now ready to take a deep rest, but she had a feeling that, as she did so, her smooth black hair would begin to crackle.


As for our middle-weight champion, this was probably the most unpleasant situation he had ever encountered since the beginning of his boxing career. He thought longingly of his Trainer, a huge Russian, named Simotzky, and he thought of the things Simotzky had told him, of his exhortations and his warnings. He remembered all the calamities which had come to boxers through women; he remembered tip-top boxers, who had grown "soft" in a short time, who "couldn't stand up against anything," simply because they had "broken loose." Terrible tales were told in his training quarters. He was really pitiably afraid that this bit of femininity under the rug might stir and cause him to commit heaven only knew what follies. But Pretty did not stir.

She lay quite still under the rug, heard the rain beating down more and more heavily, braced herself to immobility and listened-in to the young man. It seemed to her that his knees were shaking slightly, but she might have been mistaken. When she held her breath, she could hear his heart; it was beating firmly and regularly. She was not at all content to be in such a position——.

Fobianke, in the meantime, had carefully driven the car up the little road between the vineyards. Then they drove straight ahead for a quarter of a minute and then everything ended in front of a blank wall, which was about three metres high, and plentifully sprinkled on the top with broken glass.

This wall represented a boundary mark conspicuously erected to demarcate the properties of Herr Profet and Herr von Raitzold, for they were, as we know, deadly





enemies. As the chauffeur from Berlin was not familiar with this important factor in Lohwinkel life, he was somewhat perplexed by this absurd ending to the miserable road. That they had taken the wrong turn, was obvious. Herr Karbon noted this fact sullenly. It fitted in with the whole situation. He felt that he was making a fine fool of himself, sitting there in front next to the chauffeur with those two at the back under their rug. He could not even suggest taking the wheel, as, only five minutes before, he had told Fobianke to drive and he did not want to change his mind. He was condemned to sit there, his hands in his trouser pockets, and, his mind a prey to suspicious thoughts, to strain his ears to the silence in the back of the car.

As a matter of fact, driving, too, was not all joy, and Fobianke suppressed quite a number of unrefined exclamations. It was impossible to turn round, for the road was too narrow and its sides, thick with nettles and blackberry bushes, were deep and alarming. So the car had to be driven down the steep hill between the vineyards in reverse. The car, too, had now become excited and quivered beneath its surface. Fobianke felt this in his elbows. They crawled carefully back to the station through the darkness. From time to time a jolt of the car threw Leore Lania closer to the young boxer. She had relaxed all her muscles, and let herself fall against him; but he sat all the more rigid, crouching in the corner of the car; watchful and warding her off. Karbon would have liked to turn round to see what was going on at the back, but he did not do so. One did not do such things. Jealousy was old-fashioned. He did, however, consider all kinds of ways in which he could score off this Pretty, ways whereby he could hurt her horribly and pay her back. . . .

At last they reached the valley, the station and the

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signpost, and Fobianke turned left on to the right Lohwinkel Road, where it entered the last part of the Dösswald Forest.

“How much longer are we going on?” Franz Albert asked from the back; he sounded thoroughly despondent. Karbon grinned a little. He had learned to know the lad well during joint training bouts, and he liked him. Our Franz is like a cat on hot bricks, he thought, and felt better. It was not raining so hard now, or perhaps the rain had ceased altogether and the drops that were splashing down came from the trees.

“Let her out a bit, Fobianke,” Karbon commanded. The chauffeur did as he was told; the speedometer, under the little circle of light, went up to eighty, eighty-five, but the car was swaying badly. “It’s like soap——” Fobianke murmured, staring reproachfully at the damp road, on which the car’s zig-zag course could be seen.

Leore stuck out her head from under the rug and asked: “Are you driving a merry-go-round?” Karbon made no reply, but laughed softly to himself. The speed at which they were driving pressed the air against his face so fiercely that it felt like a wet, ice-cold cloth. Something occurred to Karbon, and he began to tell a story, entirely for his own amusement and without noticing whether anyone was listening to him or not.

“That reminds me of something which happened to me in Durban,” he said. “Durban, South Africa, in Natal. You must know that it’s always warm there, a lovely town, a lovely beach, a club, sport, everything. Last September when I was there, I took a taxi, a curious vehicle, high in the back, and it wasn’t driven by a negro, but by——”

Suddenly something happened. The car dashed to one side with tremendous force. The next second seemed an eternity. “Damned brute——” Fobianke had time to

say. Karbon grabbed at the wheel to help check the plunge. He saw the radiator, looming up huge and black, drive into a tree trunk, which was so glaringly illuminated that it looked white. It seemed to Karbon that all this took ages to happen. Fobianke, too, saw the bark quite distinctly; it was an oak tree, the deeply corrugated rain-soaked bark of an oak tree. The scream from the back of the car and the crash occurred simultaneously.

Then it became quite still. Only the rain rustled down from the tree tops.

The first person to discover the accident was a boy from the Estate, who fetched the empty milk cans from the station every evening. He was terribly frightened, but he behaved quite sensibly. He urged on his old horse so vigorously that he reached the Estate in twelve minutes. He went immediately to Herr von Raitzold, without stopping on the way, and told him what had happened. His report was not exactly clear; he had been so frightened that he had not looked very closely, there were no lights on the overturned car, and the small lantern on the Estate wagon was not up to much. Had anyone been injured? Herr von Raitzold asked impatiently. Yes, undoubtedly someone had been injured, for legs had stuck out under the car, legs in trousers.

"Was anyone killed?"

"That is certain," the boy said, nodding emphatically. "Quite certain."

"Dead?" Why was he so sure of this fact?

"It was so quiet there, so very quiet," the boy said. He could not forget this impression of stillness. It was so quiet down there that one heard nothing but the rain. It had been quite still.

"Harness up at once," said Herr von Raitzold, as he went over to the living-room to his sister. There were



only two horses on the Estate, and only one suitable carriage, so that more explicit orders were not necessary.

Fräulein von Raitzold was standing in front of the high desk next to the gun cupboard, adding up accounts. She was an old-looking woman of forty-two ; she had a large and aggressive nose, and her deep voice created a vague impression of massiveness and passion. From birth she had been oppressed by her name Hyacinthia, and from under her coarse tweed coat protruded her wellington boots, which were often discussed in Lohwinkel. The large green account books belonging to the Estate lay on the small inlaid rosewood table in the recess of the window. Two of the three electric bulbs in the chandelier had been turned out. The room was large, in it there hung an ancient smell of stale cigar smoke, and the few fine pieces of antique furniture stood between neglected walls and commonplace odds and ends like signposts pointing towards destruction.

Herr von Raitzold told her briefly about the accident on the Dösswald Road, while he changed from his house coat into his shooting jacket. Fräulein von Raitzold pushed aside the unpleasant and complicated taxation forms which she had been studying and went to the telephone. "The doctor was going to Profet's from here. I'll ring up there," she said. In an instant Herr von Raitzold went purple in the face and in the veins of his bald forehead.

"Please leave that alone. No telephoning to those people from my house," he said curtly.

The expression with which his sister looked at him was more thoughtful than indignant. Things were going so badly on the Estate, one was forced to realise that this hostility had reached an intolerable point. "I thought, that if human lives were concerned——" she said tentatively.

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“Bah!—human beings. If people will drive like madmen, accidents are bound to happen. I’ve ordered the carriage. You try to reach the doctor through his wife, that’s quite sufficient. I’ll see to this affair,” he added, as he opened a drawer in the gun cupboard, mechanically put a revolver in his hip pocket, and left the room.

Left alone, Fräulein von Raitzold put aside her cigar, which continued for a little while to fill the room with thin blue threads of smoke, and walked up and down in long agitated strides. The weights on the old pendulum clock jingled softly, for the clock had not been properly looked after and as a result it was very irregular. Fräulein von Raitzold stopped in front of the clock and looked at it with the same half-thoughtful, half-detached expression with which she had regarded her brother. Everything was the same: the clock was never repaired, the taxes could not be paid, there were not enough teams of horses to do the farm work properly, and, of late, the vineyard seemed to be threatened—all this, as well as the fact that Herr von Raitzold went purple with rage whenever he heard Profet’s name, seemed to combine to weigh down upon the shabby old room and to fill it with an indefinable atmosphere of depression, misery and disaster.

It was a quarter of an hour later before Fräulein von Raitzold remembered the accident on the Dösswald Road. Her perpetual and relentless daily cares had made her forget it at once. But now, after a few more strides round the table, after a brief hesitation near the bay window, where she gazed down on to the courtyard, which was dark with the rain, and looked the picture of misery with its pale, shimmering puddles, she decided to telephone to Profet despite all orders to the contrary. Herr Munk, the young operator at the Lohwinkel telephone exchange, was duly surprised when he connected the Estate with No. 23.

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Doctor Persenthein had reached Profet's home ten minutes earlier. He was dead tired and rain soaked, and he was angrily determined to get to the bottom of this illness of Profet's youngest boy. As he was still annoyed by his irritating interview with Herr von Raitzold over Jacob Wirz's death, he was in a thoroughly bad mood when he met the tearful and pathetic Frau Profet. This lady was built on generous lines and her short-sighted eyes had a restless expression. Her face, which was quite good natured, had a strained look, due to her untiring efforts to pump some sort of content into her abysmally empty life. She had no worries and she was healthy—and this seemed to her to be a little unrefined and second-rate. She had neither talents nor passions, she experienced nothing either from without or from within herself. She played the piano, she swallowed an inordinate number of books, she devoured as many human beings as she could meet, she travelled by sea and by land, and, though she lived in a small provincial town, she knew three continents and spoke four languages quite well. But from everywhere she returned to Lohwinkel possessed of a feeling of emptiness greater than the desert of Gobi. Frau Profet liked to whisper, she liked to cast about significant glances, to drape herself with melancholy. She felt a curious jealousy of unhappy people. She alluded to great renunciations in her Past and to the despair it caused her to be married to a man like Herr Profet. This did not bother Herr Profet in the least. He slapped her on the back and thought that she was better class than himself. For he was a simple man, even though he was wealthy. He lived in harmony with the whole world (except that utterly unbearable Herr von Raitzold, who was possessed of a demon of pride), and he tried to get along with Doctor Persenthein, even though he really could not bear the man.



No one in Lohwinkel could remember when this great enmity between Profet and Raitzold had actually begun, because so many versions of their hostility were now in circulation. But it was quite obvious to everyone what harm Persenthein had done to this pleasant, influential Profet. He had put the local factory inspector on his track, and had succeeded in having an expensive new vacuum cleaning apparatus installed at the works. He had listed all those cases, which would formally have been entered as gastric catarrh, as lead poisoning, and he had certified workmen as unfit for duty for shameless lengths of time. He had found that Herr Profet's blood pressure was too high, and had prescribed exercise in wood-chopping and less indulgence in the pleasure of wine. He had declared Frau Profet's alternating pains and melancholia as mere figments of her imagination, due to change of life. And now he could not even discover why the boy had in the early morning a temperature of  $40^{\circ}$  centigrade.

On this particular evening, when Doctor Persenthein began his egg-dance (for this was his own name for his visits to the Profet's mansion) he found the boy in bed, busy building a small model aeroplane. He was a good-looking youngster of twelve, with bright eyes, a snub nose, and a great many freckles. He had a slight impediment of speech which made him seem somewhat childish. He looked the doctor in the face, confidently and hopefully. Persenthein knew that expression. Boys looked at their masters in that way, when they were contemplating some stupendous rag.

Frau Profet had put on a white nurse's apron. She walked about on tiptoe, and her affected manner got very much on the nerves of the over-tired doctor.

"Any temperature at five o'clock?" he asked.

"Yes. It went up again. Thirty-nine point six centigrade," Frau Profet whispered.

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"Well, well, well——" was all the doctor said. He had already taken the boy's healthy, normal pulse between his fingers. "Well—let's have a look——" he added as he threw back the bedclothes. "Where is your big brother?" he asked, beginning to percuss the boy's abdomen. "Discussing the next football match—so? I thought that Putex didn't allow them any more? What? Now breathe, breathe again. Don't talk—does it hurt you here? Yes? And here? Not at all? Now answer carefully—doesn't it hurt at all here? Well, well—so it hurts after all. So you see——"

Doctor Persenthein remained seated before the boy's stripped, thin, brown body and thought things over. The blue mark near the groin, where he had been hit during the last match, had already faded into a pale yellowish colour and was no longer worth noticing. It seemed obvious that the boy was in good health; it was equally obvious that he was shamming illness. But how the devil did he work up this temperature? "Let's take it," Persenthein said.

The boy gave a gulp.

"Does it hurt you to swallow?" Persenthein asked.

"I don't quite know——" the boy answered.

Frau Profet sighed deeply. Herr Profet, who had put on his slippers, came out from the next room and asked loudly: "Well, Doctor, have you finally found your bearings with the diagnosis?" Persenthein fiddled about a bit with the aeroplane model without answering.

Frau Profet placed her finger to her mouth. "His temperature is being taken," she whispered with the air of a tragic conspiracy.

Herr Profet shuffled away good naturedly. "I am a better prophet than you are," he said, for it was one of the joys of his life to make puns of this kind with his name, and at meetings of the Savings Bank Committee

*Karl D. ...*  
and the City Council he had great success with these jokes.


"Now, then——" Persenthein said, when the thermometer had not gone above thirty-six point six. "I think that to-morrow he can go back to school." The boy's eyes filled with tears in a moment. He did not want to go to school. He hadn't been staying in bed for nothing, taking gruel three times a day. He was threatened with a hiding from his whole form, because he had been a sneak. Even his big brother had deserted him, and so had Kolk, his protector in the Sixth. "But I feel so bad——" he said, and this was not far from the truth.

"Now look here, my lad——" Doctor Persenthein began. He was furious with the boy, but from time to time he remembered that it behoved a family doctor to assume a friendly tone of voice. "Well, we must see what's been the cause of your remarkable temperature——" he was saying, when Herr Profet came into the room and called him to the telephone.

The doctor had barely left the room, when the boy took out the thermometer and put it into his cup of hot lemonade. The mercury went up as far as it could go, right up to forty-three degrees centigrade, but the boy thought this was overdoing it a bit. He tried hastily to shake it down, but the mercury did not budge; finally he put the thermometer back under his arm and awaited events with a long-suffering expression on his face.

But now no one took any more notice of his extraordinary rise in temperature. Doctor Persenthein, who had been told briefly by Fräulein von Raitzold about the accident on the Düsselwald Road, rushed into the room, grabbed his bag and then stood still, with a concentrated look on his face, trying to arrange his plans. Although he had been through the war, he lost his head for five minutes at the thought of an unknown number of dying individuals, who





had been on the country road under their car for an unknown length of time. Herr Profet, who was a great man within his own limitations, pulled himself together more quickly. He was already pulling on his leather coat and shouting to Müller, his chauffeur, to bring the car out of the garage, while Persenthein stood thinking of all the things he must take with him to the scene of the accident. Frau Profet, who had turned pale, retired to a chair in the corner of the room. She was filled with sublime and grateful sentiments at the thought that something had happened, that finally something extraordinary had occurred even in Lohwinkel. Suddenly her husband looked like a man, and the doctor's forehead seemed higher and nobler than ever before.

In Lohwinkel every bit of news was generally known within ten minutes. The first cyclists were already on their way to the spot where the accident had occurred when Müller, the chauffeur, began to warm up the engine of the car in front of Profet's villa. Doctor Persenthein was still talking to his wife on the telephone. "Tetanus syringe? Eukodal? Splint dressings!" he shouted his orders into the instrument, and in answer to each question he heard the clear, sensible voice of his wife:

"It's all ready."

"I should be glad to accommodate the wounded," Frau Profet whispered in the background, feeling like a character in some novel.

"Cardiazol! There is no cardiazol in the house!" Doctor Persenthein shouted into the telephone.

"Yes, there is. I went over to Behrendt's and fetched some," Elisabeth was saying over in the Angermann House.

"You are splendid!" the doctor shouted loudly.

"Shall I come with you?" she asked after a quarter of a second.

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“No, but be prepared——” he called, before he ran down the steps after Herr Profet. He did not know himself for what she was to be prepared; he felt only that he needed her, that she must be there waiting for him whatever happened. . . .

The stillness, which had frightened the boy from the Estate, impressed the doctor too when he reached the scene of the accident, and it was further intensified by the regular splashing of the rain on the birch leaves of the forest.

The car was still lying upside down, partly on the path, and partly in the ditch. The wind-screen had been smashed, but otherwise apparently not much damage had been done. On the stump of a tree a young man with a dirty face—it was Franz Albert—was flinging his arms about, as though striking out against invisible ropes, and groaning. Herr von Raitzold, who had arrived ten minutes before Herr Profet’s car, was looking after him. His carriage stood a little to one side of the road and the boy from the Estate was holding the nervous horses by the bridle. Peter Karbon was sitting on the grass, his back against a tree; Leore Lania lay in front of him, her head on his knees. Her eyes were closed and her face was almost unrecognisable from blood. From time to time fresh blood gushed forth from a wound over her mouth. Even her little cap, which she was holding convulsively in her hand, was drenched with blood, as though she had tried to staunch the flow with it.

“Is there anyone else under the car?” Persenthein asked. Raitzold shook his head. (He and Herr Profet had bowed to each other with the courtesy of two men about to fight a duel.)

“I can’t stand it, I can’t stand it——” Franz Albert moaned. Doctor Persenthein gave him a brief but attentive look, and left him to the landowner’s care for

the moment. It was only now that he noticed Fobianke, the chauffeur, who was lying near the ditch about eight metres from the overturned car. His legs were somewhat contracted over his stomach and he had opened his tweed jacket. The doctor bent over him and held his pocket torch over his face, which was quite white, whiter than a sheet of paper.

"Are you in pain?" he asked.

"No. Thank you," Fobianke said softly and politely. "It's better now."

"You opened your coat; is that where it hurt you?" Doctor Persenthein asked, feeling the man's body.

Fobianke thought a moment. "No——?" he said, and it sounded like a question.

Internal hæmorrhage, probably rupture of the liver, thought Doctor Persenthein. Nothing more to be done. Perhaps—if I could make a blood transfusion here on the spot, at once—I do need that instrument—230 marks—he was thinking, while he gave the chauffeur, who had ceased bleeding, an injection of Cardiazol. "You will feel better in a moment—we'll lift you into the car—lend a hand, Müller, be careful——" he said, as the other chauffeur helped him to carry the man to Profet's car.

"Thank you. I feel all right again," Fobianke said softly. He was breathing quite superficially, with his diaphragm contracted.

"How d'you manage to do that? Drive into the ditch?" Müller asked in the dialect of the district.

Fobianke looked at him for a long time in surprise. "No," he answered a long time afterwards.

Herr Profet, who had noticed disapprovingly that the doctor was attending to the chauffeur first, went up to Peter Karbon. "Are you hurt?" he asked foolishly.

"It would seem so," Karbon answered between his teeth. He was suffering damnably and he was quite



unable to move his right arm. Besides, everything was turning round in front of his eyes so that he lost his senses.

"Is that your car?" Herr Profet continued, but he got no answer. Karbon was bending over Leore, incapable of stopping the thin flow of blood from her face. "Your wife? I shall speak to the doctor at once—the lady must be attended to first—I can't understand why he is attending to the chauffeur first—we'll take you to my house in my car at once," Herr Profet said. "Allow me to introduce myself. My name is Profet. I own the factory in Lohwinkel," he added.

"My name is Karbon," Karbon murmured, making an effort to be polite, but Profet did not then catch the well-known name. He went back to the car. Fobianke had already been laid down on the back seat. (To be on the safe side, Persenthein had given him a tetanus injection.) And now he lay there peacefully, looking up at the roof of the car. He would have felt quite well if only patches of blackness had not danced before his eyes. Besides, there was so little air in the closed car. Profet walked past Herr von Raitzold, as though he had been invisible, tapped the doctor's shoulder and said: "Why don't you attend to the lady first?"

Persenthein merely gave him a look; Profet withdrew at once.

Suddenly, Franz Albert, sitting on his tree stump, had something like an attack, just as the doctor was coming up to him with the tetanus syringe. His groans had changed to loud weeping and sobbing and finally ended in the unconcerned and uncontrolled yelling of a small child: "I can't stand this, I can't stand this, I can't stand this!" he screamed again and again at the top of his voice. Persenthein examined and felt the body of the young man, who with his crying and his frenzied

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waving of his arms was greatly alarming poor Herr von Raitzold. The boxing champion was merely suffering from a nervous shock, and nothing more.

"Come on. Can you give us a hand?" the doctor asked severely, but Franz Albert only went on weeping. He had a swelling over the left eye and that was all.

"Don't scream like that," Persenthein said. "I'll attend to you in a moment. But get into the car first."

And by the time Persenthein had gone over to Karbon and was kneeling beside the actress, the boxer had actually got up from his tree stump and, with loud wails and ululations, had walked over to Herr Profet's car.

"She has fainted, but she is breathing," Karbon said to Persenthein, who filled his tetanus syringe for the third time. Karbon's voice was abnormally loud, because his ears were filled with a dark rushing sound and he could not estimate distances.

Suddenly Leore said something. Her words were indistinct and impeded by her wounded mouth, but she seemed attentive and awake, despite the fact that her eyes were closed. Persenthein, who was used to the intermittent speech of very ill and dying people, understood what she said.

"I'm not unconscious," she was whispering, though she slurred the labial letters, which made what she said sound rough and abrupt. She winced as she felt the prick of the syringe, but she was far from complaining. As she felt the doctor's face with its vital and helpful warmth near her face, her sudden weakness caused her to confide something to him. "I am only bleeding to death," she whispered in his ear. She was one of those delicate but tough human beings, who consider any physical weakness as a thing to be ashamed of, something that must be kept a secret from others, who are strong and healthy. It seemed to her an ignominious defeat to lie

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bleeding to death on a country road. She was already pulling herself together to preserve decorum and make a dignified exit.

"Nonsense—bleeding to death," Persenthein said. "You have a slight cut. We'll sew it up presently. Now it will stop bleeding," he said coming back from the car (where he had spread out the contents of his bag on the bonnet), with some cotton wool and placing some plaster on the wound. "Now it will stop bleeding at once."

He felt very self-confident as he worked there among the wounded, taking in the situation, organising everything and setting things right. But he was missing Elisabeth, missing her acutely. She was a splendid help to him in times of need. He scolded himself for not having brought her with him, but it was a comfort to think that she was at home and ready for his return with a car load of invalids. . . .

"Thank you. . . ." Leore Lania said. Her mouth was beginning to burn under the iodine, and this little act of politeness cost her a great effort. The fact that this young girl was bearing up so well, gave Persenthein a sudden feeling of exasperation with the loud groans of the young boxer, whom he had ordered to be taken to the car. He went quickly back to the car, filled his syringe and squirted some Eukodal into the boy's arm. "Now you must keep quiet," he ordered abruptly.

Müller, the chauffeur, had been thoughtful enough to turn on the light in the car, and Persenthein glanced at Fobianke's bloodless face. The man now lay quite still. "Well, are you all right?" the doctor asked cheerfully.

"Thank you, yes. Only the window—air——" the man answered with a sudden intensity, but he relapsed at once into his dazed speechlessness. He opened and closed his jacket over and over again, but his fingers were



growing more and more helpless and the patches of blackness ever flitting past his eyes frightened him.

Hardly ten minutes had passed since the doctor's arrival at the scene of the accident. On the surface everything was being done in a quiet and orderly manner, but underneath prevailed an almost frenzied excitement. Everything was wet under the steady rain. It was cold, and everywhere the moisture shimmered in the reflection of the car lights. Persenthein's mind felt overwhelmingly clear as he filled his syringe, washed it in alcohol and injected it into his patients. It was as though memories of forgotten experiences were flowing back into his mind from many channels, so that everything became clear, and free from question and doubt. He was magnificently in his element, and he again resembled Saint George, though there was no one present to observe this fact.

The others, who had come to help, seemed all the more confused by comparison, particularly because the two hostile gentlemen were at pains clearly to demarcate their fields of activity. As soon as his weeping charge had been lulled to sleep, Herr von Raitzold turned his attention to the car in the ditch. His coachman and the boy from the Estate tried to turn the car over, but they were not successful. Herr von Raitzold stood near them, straddling his legs, and looking like the ex-officer he was. He rapped out short words of command, but the men's efforts did not seem very hopeful until Müller, the chauffeur, joined them. Herr Profet, in the meantime, had again walked over to Peter Karbon. He was a resourceful and rather energetic man, but he could not stand the sight of blood. He had been feeling slightly sick all the time. He was afraid to lend a hand anywhere; he would have preferred not to see too much of what was going on. He felt very important, and, at the same time, rather out of the picture. He was surprised to observe how com-

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petently and quietly this doctor tackled everything, but, at the same time, he could not get rid of a suspicion that everything that was being done, was being done wrong.

"Now, help me to carry the girl to Raitzold's carriage," Persenthein ordered. "I can't examine the man properly until she has been moved." Everything about this sentence irritated the factory owner. This fellow Persenthein had called the lady "a girl," and the gentleman "a man," and it was particularly annoying that the lady was to be taken to Raitzold's carriage.

"Why to Raitzold's carriage, why not to my car?" he asked rebelliously.

"Because the chauffeur is already in the car," the doctor answered. He suppressed the real reason, which was that he did not want the girl to be present in case the chauffeur died on the way. So he picked up Leore and carried her light body over to Raitzold's old-fashioned carriage with the turned-back hood. The landowner stood ready to receive her, and turned back the leather apron himself.

"Of course, I'll take the lady to the Estate," he said loudly, so that his words could be heard by Herr Profet, who stood aside grumbling to himself.

"No, don't drive to the Estate," said the doctor. "Go to the Angermann House. I must stitch her up. You can start now. We'll catch you up in the car."

Herr von Raitzold arranged himself in the back seat; the coachman took the streaming blankets off the horses.

"Is our dear lady comfortable?" he asked, bringing out his long-forgotten man-of-the-world manners, which had almost been lost on the acres of his Estate. The actress, whose wounded face had begun to burn, pulled herself together to make a touchingly gallant gesture.

"*Auf Wiedersehen*——" she said, waving her hand from the carriage with the practised graciousness of a film

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star. She would have smiled as well if something on her injured face, which was disfigured with sticking plaster, had not prevented her from doing so. The carriage bumped along with a jolting motion which hurt like the devil.

"My face all cut up. Patched up by some country doctor picked up by the roadside," she was thinking. "If he makes a mess of it—if my face is ruined—if something important has been cut through—some important muscle or nerve—if anything like that has happened, I must shoot myself." These thoughts were deep within herself. She was horribly afraid, she felt dumb and choking, the way people feel who are seriously contemplating suicide.

The first cyclists from Obanger, Lohwinkel and Düsseldorf had arrived on the spot. They stood stupidly round the scene of the accident, whispering and looking on. All the time fresh little lights from bicycle lamps appeared on the road, and met the carriage from the Estate. The coachman was driving carefully through the rain, but he was unable to prevent the hard wheels of the carriage from jolting.

"Now, at last, I can attend to you," said Doctor Persenthein to Peter Karbon. One look had assured the doctor that this fellow was enduring and tough and could wait. Karbon had, in fact, in the meantime, made an effort to get up. He now stood, his legs astride, swaying a little on his feet.

"I can wait," he said. "Attend to the others first. Has anything serious happened?"

"No—I hope not——" Persenthein muttered. "And you? You've been bleeding from the nose?"

"It bled a little," Karbon said apologetically.

"Stand on tiptoe a moment," the doctor told him. Karbon did so obediently, but he fell forward and was caught by the doctor. "Ah, I thought so," Persenthein said, approaching Karbon with his tetanus syringe.



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"I don't want any morphine. My brain is stupid enough as it is," said Karbon.

"It isn't morphine. It's a serum. Prophylaxis against traumatic tetanus," Persenthein muttered. He was already shooting the injection into Karbon's arm. From his experiences of hospitals in the war, he had retained an exaggerated fear of tetanus.

"Have I been injured?" Peter asked looking down at his body, which caused him to be seized with a fresh fit of giddiness. "My arm is broken, but has anything else happened?" he added, after Persenthein had set him down again on the grass.

"Your face and hands are scratched a bit," Persenthein said. He had already got out his metal gauze splints. But he found no broken bones. Peter Karbon drew in his breath sharply between his teeth, while all kinds of painful things were being done to him. He tried to forget about himself and to concentrate on the others. "What has happened to Lania?" he asked, while Persenthein was discovering that only the shoulder blade had been dislocated.

"To whom?" he asked.

"To Lania, the little girl, the actress," Karbon said. He had not remembered for the moment that Lania's name was possibly not as familiar here in the backwoods as it was elsewhere in the world.

"Oh—the lady is an actress? No, she's not seriously hurt. Her face is cut, the upper lip has been cut. We'll sew it up at once. Now come along, you're practically unhurt. We'll set your shoulder blade at home. Only your chauffeur——"

Persenthein supported Peter Karbon's unhurt shoulder with his own. They were about the same height. Persenthein was broader and not quite so tall. Peter was taller, narrower and leaner, but he was now stumbling badly—and this made him furious.

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By this time the doctor was dripping with rain and perspiration. The last quarter of an hour had been rather too strenuous. The dark crowd of people from Lohwinkel, standing in a semi-circle, pressed a little closer as Persenthein helped his last patient into the car. The men in the back row stood on tiptoe. After all, an accident on the Dösswald Road did not occur every year. Müller, the chauffeur, who had organised some of the workers from the factory into a small gang to help him lift the overturned car, came over to them quickly. Herr Profet, who was tired of standing about in the rain and was irritated and offended with Persenthein, because the lady had driven off in Raitzold's old carriage, had already got into the car. Inside the car it was horribly airless and the sound of deep breathing was uncanny. The boxer on the front seat had fallen forward and was sleeping off his dose of Eukodal. Fobianke, his eyes wide open, lay dumbly on the back seat, and inhaled tremulous draughts of air through his lips, which showed quite white under his moustache, they were so bloodless.

"Herr Profet, you must sit on the front seat next to Müller," the doctor commanded. In full sight of the assembled inhabitants of Lohwinkel and Obanger, Herr Profet was compelled to crawl back out of his own car. To cover his shame, he gave his chauffeur some instructions and ordered a few of his workmen to tow the wrecked car to the factory. The circle of cyclists silently made room as Müller moved forward with the car very carefully.

"There are two dead in the car already," said a man in a short coat.

"The others will die, too," another answered. He was the apprentice of Seyfried, the butcher.

Persenthein had placed Karbon next to the drowsy



boxer. The doctor himself sat next to Fobianke, with his hand on his failing pulse.

"What's the matter with you, Fobianke?" Karbon asked without turning round, for that made him feel giddy. He heard the chauffeur answer softly: "There—is—nothing—wrong—with me—Herr Karbon." And then Karbon thought of Lania again. His thoughts of her were curiously distant. He did not think of her as Pretty, but as a woman, whose face could be seen on bill-boards and whose picture, gigantically enlarged and coarsened, seemed to scream out at night at the entrances of Berlin's cinemas.

"Cut?" he asked. "But it is worth millions——"

"What are you saying?" the doctor asked.

"Her face. Millions. It's not such an easy thing to patch up——"

Persenthein noticed the distrust which lay in this apparently incoherent and feverish sentence. Suddenly he felt so tired, that his terrible exhaustion seemed to cover him like a dark cloth. A moment ago he had still been triumphantly clear-headed; all his actions had seemed perfectly right. Suddenly, now, he was frightened. Perhaps everything that he had done was wrong. Perhaps he should first of all have taken the chauffeur to Schaffenburg by the quickest route? But if his diagnosis of a rupture of the liver were correct, Schroeder in Schaffenburg could not have done anything more either. But what if it was something else——?

And the girl. He suddenly remembered that a cut upper lip was confoundedly difficult to sew up. He saw in his mind the page in Wullstein-Wilm's *Text Book of Surgery*, which treated of this matter. If the red part of the lip was not fitted together to a millimetre, the patient's beauty was done for. "That's quite beyond me," he thought furiously. "I'm not a dermatologist." He was



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tired, that was all. Just tired. He had worked all day long and had been called out the previous night as well. His day's work had been so long that Wirz's death seemed to have happened in some remote and hazy past. And now, if you please, he had to perform operations. Elisabeth—he thought, but he was not thinking of the woman herself. He was thinking of the lamp at home, of the atmosphere at home, and of the strong black coffee at home. He greedily took out a cigar and bit off the end.

“What's the matter? Open the window, I tell you!” Fobianke shouted, just as the doctor was about to light his cigar. The cigar rolled to the floor, and the doctor again took hold of the man's pulse. It was no longer perceptible. He quickly placed his stethoscope on the man's heart, which was ceasing to beat.

The car smelt of wet leather, of the street, of perspiration and of metal. The light had been turned off, for Müller had orders to be economical. Karbon, who was at home in any make of car even when he was only half conscious, found the switch and turned on the light with his uninjured left hand. Bending over Franz Albert, who was still asleep, he turned the handle with his left hand to open the window. Outside there was blackness, pierced by sheets of soughing rain. Inside the car the men—wet through, soaked with perspiration, dirty, covered with bumps, stains and bloodshot bruises—presented a sufficiently ugly spectacle.

“Nice mess we've got into,” Karbon murmured, making a tiny angry attempt at a laugh.

Fobianke was again driving into a tree, and his wife was there, somewhere behind those black things, which always seemed to float between him and the road. “Do open the window,” he begged, “do open the window.” The doctor helped him as he gasped for the next two breaths.

It seemed to Fobianke that he would soon be able to get air. He breathed in, quickly, violently and desperately—and then he exhaled slowly. His pulse had already stopped, but Fobianke still lived. Then his head slipped down a little further on Doctor Persenthein's breast, and there was silence in the car.

"The windows *are* open, Fobianke," Peter Karbon said. He felt sick enough himself, but he tried to assume a comforting tone of voice.

But his chauffeur was dead.

Now they were approaching the town. Under the statue of Saint George was burning one of Lohwinkel's one hundred and ninety-four lamp-posts. The Angermann House shook as they drove through the gateway. The cyclists with their small lanterns surrounded the slowly moving car like a swarm of glow-worms, piercing the darkness of the October night.

It does not prove that a person is famous, if his name is known only in great wideawake cities like Berlin, Paris or London. Real fame does not begin until people in every little out-of-the-way place know who and what a person is. Bill-boards, films, wireless talks and illustrated newspapers, these are the heralds who blazon the fame of their favourites until they are known in every nook and cranny of the world.

They were celebrities of this kind who now found shelter in Lohwinkel because of injuries, which were fortunately not very serious. Leore Lania was known to everyone who attended the cinema performances which were held every Wednesday and Saturday in Oertchen's Inn, the White Swan's enterprising competitor. This meant that everyone in Obanger and almost everyone in Lohwinkel knew about her—with the exception of the pupils at the Gymnasium, who were forbidden by Head

Master Burhenne, an avowed enemy of the cinema, to attend these performances, and a few people from Priel, such as Frau Profet and the wife and daughters of Doctor Ohmann, the mayor, who were too exclusive and too sophisticated to attend them. Karbon's tyre advertisement, too, was read daily in Lohwinkel ; it was blue and yellow and hung near the petrol station, which was run by Torbiss, the coachmaker. Franz Albert's name was known at any rate to all the young men in Lohwinkel, beginning with those in the fourth form. And other people, too, in the town could remember newspaper reports, which they had read with a certain repugnance, about some boxer's return from America which had been celebrated in a disgustingly exaggerated manner.

The fact that a noteworthy accident had occurred on their road filled the Lohwinklers with that strange mixture of pride and pleasurable horror, which usually accompanies all catastrophes. But when it became known the next morning how many celebrities this accident had brought to Lohwinkel, the little town began to seethe with excitement. Groups of excited and curious citizens congregated at the chief meeting-places of the town ; at Kuhammer's, the hairdresser's ; at Seyfried's, the butcher's ; at Markus', the Jew's. Behrendt, the chemist, called a special meeting of the Unity Club to be held at the White Swan that evening, for he appreciated the urgent need of his fellow-members to discuss the affair and to exchange the information they had gleaned. The Gymnasium was in a fever from top to bottom. Letters, twisted into paper balls, were incessantly shot through the classrooms by means of catapults of rubber bands, and the shouting in the school courtyard during the recess was simply deafening. Everyone found a pretext for being out of doors. Some stood together at the street corners exchanging opinions ; others walked up and down in



front of the houses in which the injured had been harboured. A few individuals, on the other hand, were more patient; for example, Fräulein Ritting, the dressmaker in the Wassergasse, and Haberlandt, the cobbler, who was eighty-four years old, not to mention Munter, who was a war invalid and quite blind. Patient people like these sat for hours among a throng of children in front of these houses and waited in a strange expectancy for something quite unusual to happen.

Frau Profet, for instance, who had taken in Franz Albert, saw total strangers sitting on her garden wall from morning till night whenever she looked out of the window. Although Franz Albert's only injury was a blue bruise next to his nose—and this was by no means the first time in his life that he had suffered an injury of this kind—and although his nerves had now recovered from the shock and he sat eating heartily at her breakfast table, Frau Profet still wore her white nurse's apron, and hovered like a guardian angel around her injured guest.


Leore Lania had been captured by Herr von Raitzold and had been dragged out to the Estate like a trophy. He had really done so to spite Herr Profet, and a grotesque quarrel over the injured had arisen and been fought out that very night in the small hall of the doctor's house, while Persenthein himself was sewing up the actress's upper lip in the surgery.

As a matter of fact this trivial, but rather ticklish, operation had been a strange affair. For when Frau Doktor Persenthein had washed Leore Lania's pallid face and the doctor had noticed its sweetly severe contours, he had been plunged into an abyss of fear and self-distrust. Lania did not seem to be afraid; she did not complain, nor did she wince. She simply said, in her deep, broken voice, like a child's—Frau Persenthein thought

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her voice was like Rehle's—impeded as she was by the open wound on her upper lip, that she would rather die than go about with a marred face. Then she lay down, submitting quietly to the first painful pricks of the novocaine injection, even though the doctor was not handling the syringe particularly adroitly at the moment.

He had felt the seriousness behind the murmured sentence, and Frau Persenthein, too, who stood in the back of the room near the steriliser, had understood in a flash that, for the actress, everything depended upon the beauty of her face. Elisabeth glanced at her husband with excited and watchful eyes. He was waiting for the local anæsthetic to make the wound stiff with cold and insensitive. He had covered Lania's face with white cloths, only exposing the field of operation, but before covering her face he had glanced anxiously at the fine Indian curves and delicate modelling of her features. He wanted to do his work particularly well; he asked for the finest needles, forgetting for the moment that the skin of the lips is particularly hard and tough. Later he found that these needles would not do, he had to sterilise others, to make a fresh injection so that the effect of the novocaine would be prolonged; and Frau Persenthein, who was threading the needles with catgut, handling tampons and handing him clamps, was trembling so violently that Lania noticed it, even under her cloths.

"I have far more cause to tremble," she thought scornfully, but she did not do so. It was incredibly tragicomic, to lie here, delivered up to an excitable village barber-surgeon, who did not seem to know what he was doing. When it was over and she left the operating table, bandaged and plastered, she felt only an abysmal hate for everything in this place. She hated the doctor's wife with her home-made face; she hated the smell of boiled soap clinging to the doctor's overall, which was so close to her;



she hated every word and every sound and every movement about her, for everything seemed to be striking blows upon her taut nerves. When Frau Persenthein invited her to sleep in her own bed, she shook her head so vehemently that her gesture was almost insulting.

Frau Persenthein, distressed and intimidated by this refusal, turned the actress over to Fräulein Hyacinthia von Raitzold, who had cycled over from the Estate in her top boots and was now waiting in the hall with Herr von Raitzold. And Leore Lania resigned herself with a strange confidence to the large hands, the deep voice and the masculine odour of leather, tobacco and earth which clung to this worthy lady.

And so it came about that Peter Karbon, whose dislocated shoulder was again treated last of all by the doctor, was the last to remain in the Angermann House. Towards one o'clock in the morning, when he had had his shoulder reset, but was still shivering from nervous exhaustion, he was given shelter in Frau Persenthein's bed. With his brain in a whirl, he stared at the strange grain in the wooden ceiling. He felt the slope of the bed at his feet and he was filled with gratitude when a spoonful of sweet, hot milk, reminding him of his childhood, was poured between his parched lips and relieved his ague. He saw a long quiet hand moving slowly over his heart and then he sank into a deep narcotic sleep.

Doctor Persenthein, who had so far kept himself going with kola pastilles, caffein and a strychnine tonic, and whose nerves had now reached breaking-point, took a veronal himself and lay down on the American-cloth covered divan in the surgery.

Frau Persenthein strayed about the house for a little while, feeling as though she were walking in a dream. Finally she fetched the old arm-chair from the sitting-room and placed it in the open door between the bed-



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room and Rehle's room. Then she sat, bolt upright, and went to sleep.

She slept so lightly that she never ceased to hear the breathing in both rooms: Rehle's monotonous, short child's breathing, interrupted by the tiny sighs which accompanied her dreams, and the long, irregular breathing of the patient who was sleeping in her own bed. She got up a few times during the night to look after him. She had left the night light burning and the tiny flame was swimming about on the yellow oil. It looked like some lost little island of light in the darkness of the strange, deep night. Once, Elisabeth, who was dazed with sleep, stood for a long time gazing at him intently. He looked so tired-out as he slept, with those deep wrinkles on his forehead under his bright red hair, which had tumbled forward and lay thick over his brows. Once she rearranged the coverlet which he had pushed aside restlessly, and once, when he seemed to be in pain, she stroked his bluish, somewhat swollen arm very carefully. Behind the mists of veronal he murmured something, as she did this; and he reached out for her hand with his uninjured one and placed her fingers between his cheek and the pillow. Meanwhile, the night light had burned blue and had gone out. As Elisabeth smiled at this unconscious and trustful movement, there was a listening expression on her face. She left her hand there until it grew stiff; then she drew it away carefully and went back to her arm-chair. She went to sleep again, while outside the dawn came, and this time she dreamed her old childhood dream. She was carrying a basket which was filled with golden fruit, but was very light (the golden fruit of her dream had nothing to do with the oranges in Markus' shop). Carrying this basket she walked straight into the landscape which had hung over her bed at home in a picture of the Bay of Naples. The fact that Herr Markus

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was playing the Brahms A Major Sonata as she walked somewhat disturbed the floating lightness of her dream, and then the church bells began to ring. Everything became heavy; Elisabeth woke up; and Saturday morning began.

She had to wake up Nick, wake up Lungaus, light the fire, and get the breakfast, coffee for Nick, porridge for Lungaus, stewed apple for Rehle. The daily maid, Marie, was late, and Frau Persenthein was trembling and weak from her hurried exertions by the time she finally found time to look after her guest, who was awake and had already been examined by the doctor.

The man, who sat upright there in her bed, was quite a different person from the man she had stroked during the night. He was strange, far stranger than the other had been, and a little alarming.

"What funny things I'm wearing," Peter Karbon said, responding to her look. He could move his hand and his arm a little more easily now, though it still hurt him to do so. For some time he had been gazing in wonder at the little blue border, representing some sort of idealised miniature ivy, on his white cuffs.

"I gave you one of my husband's nightshirts," Elisabeth answered, feeling suddenly shy.

"I see," Peter said; he cast an instinctive look at the empty bed by his side and then became silent with embarrassment. He hated to show himself in a night-shirt with a little blue border; while Elisabeth, whose knowledge of silk pyjamas was confined to the books she had read, did not realise what was wrong. She balanced the breakfast tray on Karbon's knee and supervised the meal. She was wearing her new apron, a blue one, with a design of red lady-birds crawling over it. She had stood a long time in front of the glass cupboard to select one of the nice old gilt cups for her guest. Karbon,

being a man, did not notice the cup at all, but he did notice the apron and he stretched himself contentedly under the strange coverlet.

"Are you feeling better?" Elisabeth asked shyly, putting her hand up to her hair, which was a trick of hers. Karbon's eyes unconsciously followed the movement of her hand and he noticed that her hair was shining.

"I feel wonderful," he said, stretching himself in comfort to an even greater length under the coverlet. "My brain is functioning again and my arm is beginning to behave itself."

"Yes. You didn't even have a real concussion of the brain, the doctor says. And if your shoulder has been properly set, in a few days you won't feel any the worse for it. Did it hurt you very much yesterday?"

"The setting of it wasn't exactly a treat, thanks very much. The doctor gripped me rather like a cannibal. He put his foot in my arm-pit—jolly good of him!"

Elisabeth laughed to herself. "He's very proud of that grip. It's a classical one he learnt from some old village doctor," she said.

"Oh," Peter Karbon said a little doubtfully. He really felt as though he had landed among aborigines. The woman took up the tray and left him, and he felt a slight tinge of regret. Then a little girl appeared at the door—native children were always curious, as Karbon knew, for he had travelled widely. The child eyed him attentively.

"Good morning. May I see your bandage?" Rehle asked, for she was passionately interested in all medical matters; and, in token of this, she carried about a doll without any arms, but plastered with many odd pieces of white rubber plaster.

"I don't think I have any bandage," Peter said, and he noticed that the child's hair shimmered as her mother's hair had shimmered a moment ago in the same pale



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morning sun. The cuts on his hands were, indeed, unbandaged; for, true to his ideas, Doctor Persenthein did not like to close up wounds. He would have preferred to put his patients in the sun and to tell them to lick their wounds like dogs or cats.

"That's too bad," Rehle said, coming a little nearer. "Nick sends his love and says I am to nurse you until he comes home."

"Thank you, young lady? And who is Nick?"

"Why, that's the doctor, of course," Rehle said, pressing her knees firmly against the side of the bed, although it was forbidden to do this when visiting invalids.

"I see, and who are you?"

"I am Rehle. You know my mother. Nick is my mother's child," she explained, for this is how the Persenthein family relations were represented in her small head.

"Then the doctor is your brother?"

"How stupid you are," said Rehle. "Of course, Nick is my father. Can I nurse you now?" she added, briefly closing the conversation.

Peter Karbon considered this last bit of information for a moment, and began to smile. "So all of you have the same mother?" he asked, and suddenly he had a very clear idea of this Frau Doktor with her kitchen apron and her smooth honey-coloured hair, who moved her slender hand gently across one's heart when one felt miserable.

"Yes. Lungaus is my mother's child too," Rehle announced.

"And who is Lungaus?"

"That's the old man in the attic. Well, can I nurse you now at last?" Rehle inquired impatiently.

Peter Karbon lay down comfortably. "Yes, please, do nurse me," he said expectantly. Rehle walked over to

the wash-stand, washed her little paws very seriously and carefully, and then returned to the bed and patted the pillows and coverlet in a very professional manner. Next she took hold of Peter's large brown hand and wrinkled her forehead as though she were counting his pulse. Lastly, she sat down on the side of the bed and began to stroke Peter's hair away from his forehead. He did not object. He had known no tenderness of this droll kind since his little lemur had died of consumption and homesickness.

"I have been thinking of a jungle village called Beni-Sanka," he said when Frau Persenthein appeared again at the door. "I was played-out, with fever, of course, for I'd gone right into the jungle, and a trip like that doesn't agree with Europeans at all. I was nursed through it by a little woman. She was twelve years old and had two children. An enchanting little woman, she was."

This tale so amazed Frau Persenthein that she remained standing motionless in the doorway. Here in her old walnut bed was lying a gentleman, who talked quite casually about India. She again drew timidly nearer to the bed, thought things over and then put it all into a single question :

"Is Miss Lania from India, too ? "

"Lania ? How do you mean ? No, of course not. What put that idea into your head ? "

"Oh—I don't know. She looks so—so exotic."

"Exotic—yes, that may be. Yes, she does look exotic, it's her business to look exotic. No, she doesn't know herself where she comes from." He began to laugh to himself, while the apron with the lady-bird pattern began to bustle about his bed. "That's the amusing thing about Lania—her untruthfulness and her unreliability. With her it's all a morass, nothing to hold fast. Some-

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times she's the daughter of a general, stationed in Görz, evacuated during the war ; mother has heart attack while escaping from the garrison ; mother dies, and she is left alone in the big city. At other times she has twelve brothers and sisters, her parents peasants, sunflowers growing outside the windows, and all that. Sometimes she is an illegitimate child, terrible childhood, escapes from an orphan asylum. Sometimes she has been adopted by a legendary uncle, a bank director, and so forth. A remarkable person, this little Pretty. How is she, by the way ? " he asked finally, and merely out of politeness' sake. Everything had seemed so strange since yesterday. He remembered hundreds of trivial incidents of the past, but immediate events seemed to move away from him, and appear meaningless. I must have had a good knock across my skull, he thought, or am I still doped with veronal ? I feel marvellously indifferent to everything. He stretched out his two arms, straight in front of him, and lay there, as infants do who have not yet learned how to master their limbs.

" Well ? " asked Elisabeth.

" Oh, I feel so queer—I can't estimate distances properly. I don't know whether you are far away, or so close that I can touch you."

" You can touch me——" she said smiling, as she laid his hands on her shoulders. There was something in this gesture that pleased him. She soon withdrew her shoulders from the warm palms of his hands, but he continued to feel it for half an hour afterwards.

" Is she married ? " Elisabeth asked. " It was too late yesterday to notify anyone of her accident. The post closes at nine."

" Who ? " asked Karbon, for he had quickly forgotten Lania again. " Lania ? Yes, I suppose she is married ——"



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“Is the other gentleman her husband?” asked Elisabeth, who wanted to bring a little order into the complicated relationships of these people from Berlin. The chauffeur’s death had so far been kept a secret; but these strange people had a strange manner of disregarding their own misfortunes as though they were nothing at all. Whereas she herself, Frau Elisabeth Persenthein, had gone to sleep the night before with trembling knees and had awakened this morning with her knees still trembling; the doctor was flying about the district like a rocket, freshly primed, freshly ignited and shot up to the heavens by the great event; even Lungaus was wandering hysterically about the town announcing new developments like a travelling showman; and in the shed, with two chairs, Rehle was playing at motor-car accidents, a disastrous game for many of her dolls.

“Our little man—her husband? What an idea!” was all Peter could say, as he watched Elisabeth tidying up the room with a dust-pan and brush. How long-limbed she was, he was thinking; amazing how good breeds are preserved in these small towns. Her knees were set high and her hips were as long as the hips in the dreams of poster artists. “Lania is my—mistress,” he declared.

Elisabeth stopped brushing the floor. She raised herself to her full height and then bent down again, quickly hiding her face in the shadow of her arms. She had flushed a deep red and she was desperately embarrassed. “Good Lord! what is the matter?” Karbon thought, completely at a loss. But Frau Persenthein was simply not equal to the information implied in his statement, which seemed to her incredibly shameless and quite unspeakable.

“Oh——” was all she said, and this one word was a tiny helpless exclamation before she fled from the room.


In the front hall, meanwhile, there had congregated a

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company of the good citizens of Lohwinkel, as alert and spruce as though at a country fair. They swarmed in the hall, and some were forced to stand outside the doorway of the Angermann House ; and, beyond, under the Gate, were people craning their necks and trying to work their way into the house by asking questions and pushing themselves through the crowd. Elisabeth sorted out the more respectable individuals and invited them to sit in her living-room. Her left eyebrow was twitching, for all morning she had felt in her eyelids the throbbing pain of nervous exhaustion, after her scanty night's rest in the arm-chair. She had not quite finished cleaning the surgery, which had been changed into a first aid station the evening before. It was Saturday, there was shopping to do, she must buy her provisions for Sunday. She must look after Lungaus, she must look after the guest and Nick—Nick first, of course, for he had twice his usual amount of work to do, and had been expending ten times his normal nervous energy since all this happened. The telephone rang constantly, which was very unusual for telephones in Lohwinkel ; and Rehle, efficient as ever, had placed a chair in front of the instrument, and, standing on it, was shouting laconic answers into the receiver.

Herr Markus was one of those who were continually ringing up and bringing Frau Persenthein to the telephone with his stuttering requests for the latest news. He was feverish with excitement, for he felt that this accident which occurred to these famous people from Berlin was his property. He had sent a telegram to a Berlin newspaper and was now preparing a long detailed report, although it was Saturday morning, just the time when his business was most brisk. He asked about every trifling detail ; but he forgot to ask how Elisabeth was feeling.

As a matter of fact, she was feeling very strange. She



had not really recovered her senses clearly since yesterday evening. Events had taken possession of her too violently, and the difficulties she was confronting were hard to explain. For instance, she had no money in the house at all, and the extra expenses were bound to be particularly heavy. She felt distinctly that she could not offer this red-haired gentleman from Berlin the peculiar Persenthein diet. She forced her way through the muttering crowd in the hall and went to the kitchen; the breakfast dishes in the sink were still unwashed, Lungaus had deposited his slippers next to the kitchen stove, but the fire was very low and for a few moments everything was in a state of hopeless confusion. Then Elisabeth fetched her cookery book and, turning over its pages, prepared a satisfactory menu. Then she went away and took some money from the drawer of the desk in which Doctor Persenthein kept his most important papers.

Money? Then there *was* money in the house, after all?

Well, yes, there were fifty marks in the drawer, the third instalment for that expensive Pantostat apparatus, which was due on the 15th, and professional payments of this kind were considered sacred in the Angermann House. And here was Elisabeth taking this sacrosanct money—she was slightly dizzy for fear of Nick—and going with it to Seyfried, the butcher, to Jaennecke, the baker, and to Markus, so that she could prepare meals worthy of a Peter Karbon.

So much for the money. But apart from that, for instance, there was not enough bed linen. Linen was terribly scarce in the Angermann House, and it was doubtful whether Frau Bartels could help her out. Not a single table napkin was there that had not been darned, for they had all been inherited and were very old. Only three dessert plates remained out of a dozen, and these three had chipped edges. As for towels—"Ye Gods!



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What towels ! ”—Frau Persenthein was thinking, as she sailed across the street with her hat and shopping bag, there had never been enough towels either for the house or for the surgery. The jug in the bedroom was broken and had been replaced by an enamel one, which didn't look well and the enamel did not match the basin. The arm-chair ought to have been re-covered, the piano was out of tune, the back of a chair was broken, and a window pane was broken. Frau Persenthein remained standing still, just in front of the church, quite overwhelmed by the small daily cares which were now rushing in upon her all at once. It was as though all the worn-out, used-up and irreparable factors in her life were suddenly falling upon her. It was a strange moment in her life, as she stood there in front of the church, with the October wind blowing on her, and clutched her old purse which contained the fifty marks for the Pantostat apparatus.

Well, if she herself simply could not manage, then Frau Profet would have to take him into her house—she thought, disposing of Peter Karbon, and then she walked on bravely. She did not know why this thought left a peculiarly bitter taste in her mouth. What, after all, had she to do with this red-haired man, who made fun of Nick's nightshirt, which she had given him, who had a film actress as a mistress and who was indiscreet enough to mention this fact to her, Frau Doktor Persenthein, while she was giving him his breakfast ? She could see him quite clearly, this new and astonishing person who lay in her bed and wanted to be nursed by her.

At the corner of the Sträuchelgasse a whirl of autumn leaves danced towards her, and, suddenly, without any apparent reason, she felt relieved as she turned into the small narrow street. “ I shall mix the dough and Jaennecke can bake it,” she thought, meaning to-morrow's cake. “ I shall keep him yet,” she thought further,

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and this time she meant Peter Karbon. "Perhaps he will be useful to Nick," she thought as well, but this thought was not quite sincere; it was merely to appease her conscience about the fifty marks and the money she was spending on the stranger.

That was the beginning. She entered Jaennecke's shop, which was fragrant with the smell of yeast, and arranged about the cake. On Sunday she missed church. On Tuesday, Peter Karbon was allowed to get up for the first time.

But on Wednesday something extraordinary happened.

Of the occupants of the ill-fated car, Fobianke was the only one whose name was unknown. He was neither a hero of the sporting world, nor a rubber king, nor a film star; he was a nameless, silent, dead brother, in a tweed suit and leather gaiters, a human being, on whose bloodless lips the last moments on earth had left a smile, like a silver radiance from the world beyond. For, during this last moment of his life, Fobianke, the chauffeur, had passed through a great brightness and a crystal clearness; he had died in a blue, blue haze, which had wafted him lightly to heights above; as he had ascended he had heard something—like bells, and yet not like bells—and then he had known a certainty: it is not difficult at all. There was nothing at all to fear. It was already over. . . .

The difficulties did not begin until Fobianke himself had overcome all and could no longer feel anything. For where, as Doctor Persenthein asked Profet, could the dead chauffeur be harboured so late at night in Lohwinkel? The next hurried hours of Doctor Persenthein belonged to the survivors. His house was small, his hall was narrow, and a dead man stretched out in the doorway of a doctor's house is not the best of recommendations. Herr Profet, on the other hand, could not possibly



think of shocking his sensitive wife by bringing a dead man to his home shortly before midnight. In Herr von Raitzold's ancestral abode there was a traditional spot where defunct von Raitzolds were laid out in state under stags' antlers; but he could not bring himself to admit a strange chauffeur to this place of honour. Possibly he might have consented to do this if he had had to quarrel with Profet over Fobianke, as he had quarrelled over the boxer and the actress. But to take something to his Estate which Herr Profet refused to have in his villa—no, he felt vaguely that his attitude towards the dead man was not quite right; but still, he simply could not bring himself to do it. Müller, the chauffeur, with his silent passenger was finally sent to the vicarage, where the light was still burning, for the curate was a bookworm and a fanatical student of botany. The old vicar was not at home; he had been summoned a little while before to administer extreme unction to an old peasant woman in Bickenwies, who, by the way, was not one of Persen-thein's patients, but a believer in Behrendt, the chemist, and his medicines. The curate looked through the documents, which Fobianke, an orderly man, had kept in his pocket with his driver's licence, saw that the deceased was a Protestant, and did not dare to take upon himself the responsibility of deciding as to whether Wilhelm Fobianke, age 47, Protestant, could be temporarily laid out in the sacristy. Müller, himself a Catholic, though not a very devout one, understood the curate's doubts: he knew the strict old vicar and had still in his bones the feeling of awe with which he had attended his first Communion. The clock in the tower struck one, and all the street lamps had been extinguished by the time he drove back to Profet's villa and asked to speak to Herr Profet.

Herr Profet had already put on his slippers and a silk



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padded dressing-gown and, as he talked with Müller in the little vestibule, the chauffeur saw the following scene through the open door.

Franz Albert, the boxer, lay on a sofa, looking drunk, as a result of the good dose of eukodal he had taken. On his left sat Frau Profet, holding his hand tightly and stroking his hair; but on his right was a little table on which stood a silver ice pail. There was a bottle of champagne in the pail, and by it were three champagne glasses. "So here they are drinking champagne——" Müller thought. He felt suddenly hot, and came to a quick decision. "That will be all right, Herr Profet," he said sturdily. "I'll just take him home with me. After all he was my colleague. I'll drive to Obanger now and see to everything. There's plenty of room to lay him out in Shed No. 3." With that he turned and left the villa, with the clear feeling that no further violence must be done to the dignity of the dead Fobianke.

Greatly relieved, Herr Profet returned to his house and his guest, and, in accordance with Persenthein's instructions, tried to stimulate the action of his heart by urging him to take a little champagne.

Müller lived in a little annexe next to the factory, as he was in charge of the three motor lorries, which Herr Profet called his Transport Department. Frau Müller was a perpendicular lady, with the strong blood and constitution of the wine-growing district. She, of course, already knew everything that had happened. She had been expecting her husband, and she said very little and made no fuss, when Müller first unloaded from the car Frau Psamatis, the layer-out, whom he had brought with him, and then hoisting the body of his dead colleague over his shoulder, carried it into the house.

Strangely pathetic as they undressed him, was the smell of cigarettes which still clung to his uniform. He wore

three wedding rings ; evidently a widower, who had married again.

Afterwards, Müller sat in front of the dead man's papers, and, late into the night, with heavy fingers and an anxious mind, he worked away at composing the following letter :

“ DEAR FRAU FOBIANKE,

“ On account of an accident your employer is not in a position to arrange things himself, and as time presses, I have taken on the difficult duty of informing you of a serious misfortune concerning your husband. He and his car drove into a ditch and capsized. He was taken away from the accident seriously injured. I drove him myself. I am terribly sorry to be obliged to give you this shock, but he died on the way. The fast train leaves Berlin at 10.13 in the evening, you must change at Schaffenburg, our station is called Düsselwald-Lohwinkel. I can fetch you in the factory car, as soon as I hear from you, and my wife, too, will do everything she can. One always thinks that this might happen to anyone, any day. With deep sympathy for your deep grief, I remain

“ HERBERT MÜLLER,

“ Chauffeur at Otto Profet's Accumulator Factory.

“ It is a comfort that the dear deceased had such an easy death. I was there when he died.”

So next morning Fobianke lay in Shed No. 3, deeply contented like most people who have died ; and all the factory workers, men and women, went there first to see him, with bared heads and much emotion. The Catholic workmen said a Paternoster, the Socialists and enlightened men and women simply folded their hands, but their silence, as they stood there, moved by something

they knew not what, was not very different from a prayer. At ten o'clock Herr Curvier and his two assistants came into the shed. He was in business as a carpenter and coffinmaker as well as an undertaker in the establishment known as A. Curvier's Successors. Herr Curvier himself was the "successor," he had inherited the business from his French ancestors, who had remained on the German side of the Rhine after some war or other. He was a man of taste, who understood his craft.

The copper plates, which were stored in the shed, were all removed; there was no stint of evergreen, and the large candles were made of real wax, the best that could be had from the candlemaker Hannemann, behind the church. By noon, between twelve and half-past twelve, when the women came from Obanger to bring their husband's lunch baskets to the factory yard, everything in the shed was ready. There was a festive fragrance of foliage, and an ever-increasing throng was striving to enter Shed No. 3. Despite the number of people, who wanted to see the dead chauffeur, it was very quiet, for all had a strong sense of respect due to the dead. Gradually all Obanger swarmed towards the factory, the women, too, and the children, and the old people and the sick; they all came. The victims of lead poisoning, whom Doctor Persenthein had certified as unfit for work, were there, too; and they stood with their white faces and blue lips feeling dumbly that something had happened, feeling dumbly that it had happened to one of their own people.

Frau Psamatis, the layer-out, had insisted on dressing the dead man in black clothes. So he lay there in the suit which Müller, the chauffeur, had lent him; although this is perhaps scarcely the right expression, for Fobianke would never return the suit. Herr Profet had said that he would bear all the expenditure until Herr Karbon was



well enough to be told about his chauffeur's misfortune. Müller's suit fitted Fobianke perfectly ; in fact he looked very much like Müller himself, for their profession had drawn the same lines on their faces, their hands were calloused in the same places, and the skin round the dead man's nails was black like the skin of the living chauffeur. Perhaps the only difference was in the expression of their faces. Fobianke looked contented ; Müller discontented.

So Saturday passed. Obanger had found a centre of interest. The pilgrimage to Shed No. 3 never ceased, and the curious individuals, who were hanging about in Lohwinkel outside the Angermann House or sitting on Frau Profet's garden wall, were quite insignificant in comparison with the hundreds who silently circled round the coffin and then walked murmuring in and out of the factory yard. Recollections of previous accidents were in the air. The worthy citizens of Lohwinkel were, of course, accustomed to dying in their beds from highly respectable illnesses, and that was why no suitable place could be found at first for this poor Fobianke, who had bled to death. But round the factory, year in year out, these sudden accidents had happened to the men at work—injuries and misfortunes of all kinds. For instance, a little group collected round the widow of the workman Kobele, for, in hushed words, she could tell them how she felt when they brought home her husband after he had been buried and suffocated in a gravel-pit. And, without knowing it, the people of Obanger were filled with resentment against what seemed injustice and fate, that the other three had come out of the accident alive, while the chauffeur alone had been killed. It was as though violent death and bloody accidents were always to be their lot and portion—the melancholy prerogative of the people of Obanger. . . .

The foreman of the works council, a man named

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Birkner, had hit on the idea of collecting money among the workers at the factory to buy a wreath. He was a fair man, with narrow black eyes and heavy hands, and from his left hand two fingers were missing. He himself rode out to the Estate on his bicycle that evening to order a wreath. In Lohwinkel, flowers were bought at the Estate, where Fräulein von Raitzold had established a small market gardener's business, and grew roses, in a desperate and absurd endeavour to set off some receipts against the increasing expenditure. The last October roses stood shivering in their beds; the tips of their leaves were red from the night-cold; and the whole family of Belle Lyonnaise was mildewed. Nothing much could be done about the small rush-baskets, which Fräulein von Raitzold herself filled with flowers every morning at five o'clock and sent to Schaffenburg with the milk cans. But there was quite enough for a wreath for the dead chauffeur.

On Sunday morning, after Mass and the sermon, when the good folk in their Sunday clothes went on their pilgrimage to the factory to see the Obanger workers lay their wreath on the coffin, they found the gate of the factory yard locked. It was a day of pale autumnal sunshine; the air was extraordinarily still; and, inside through the railings, were seen a few sparrows quarreling over some poor grains of oats, as fiercely as though they had found gold in the horse dung. Later, it was learnt that Herr Profet had ordered the gate to be locked. His factory was not a theatre, he was reported to have said. And he could not have the rabble of the entire neighbourhood running in and out of his gate, for, if any damage were done, each man would say that he was not responsible. And, once and for all, it was *his* factory, and he was at liberty to open and lock the gate, as he thought fit. And that was that!

This is what they heard from Birkner, who had apparently discussed this matter with Herr Profet. But, as to how the story of the champagne cropped up, nobody was able to say afterwards. Our friend Lungaus was one of the first to spread this tale, and, by the afternoon, it was already known to everyone in Obanger and to a good few in Lohwinkel, that immediately after the accident, in Profet's villa in Priel, they had swilled down champagne and been very gay, leaving the dead chauffeur to look after himself. In the mouth of Lungaus this story took a particularly aggressive form; and, emaciated and hollow-cheeked—as a result of his disease, combined with Doctor Persenthein's theories of diet—he stood at all the street corners, restless and rebellious, and bursting with every kind of gossip that could provoke scandal and discontent. Man alive, hadn't he helped to unpack Herr Karbon's battered trunk, with its smashed crystal bottles, everything stinking of scent, like the girls at "The Black Pike" in Schaffenburg. Why, this toff had hair brushes and things made of silver, yes, and with monograms on 'em, too. And, when he went to the w.c., he had silk trousers with lilac stripes, as though he were going to perform in a circus. As for that bitch of a girl, whom they had taken to the Estate, she was only a—well, you know! Markus, the Jew, had shown him a newspaper with her photograph in it, without a stitch on her—as true as I stand here. There was something on between her and both those Berlin fellows. It was so expensive to keep a girl like that, that nowadays two men had always to join at it. That boxer at Profet's, that boozier, had been paid as much as thirty thousand marks an evening, for just a bit of a scuffle. One could judge by that where all the money went and why one only got forty-three marks a month with a little lead in one's bones thrown in as an extra. These and other stories were spread by Lungaus through



the town. He was not a very popular man, as he was a stranger to the district, and came from North Germany; he was an unreliable fellow, and there had been talk of thefts in the factory and a prison sentence. But to-day they were ready to listen to him, and let his words implant deeply this deep burning feeling of discontent. The older workmen met in Oertchen's beer-shop in the evening—which, by the way, they did on other Sundays as well—and there was much talk about this forty-three marks a week. The piece-work pay had been docked by six pfennige, and they were damned well nailed down to these unfair wages. Anyone who did not want to work for such low wages, need not do so, said Herr Profet. Do as you please.

*1 m d r* The young workmen went out in the afternoon to their sports ground, a bare clayey field behind Obanger. Head Master Burhenne had expressly forbidden the boys in the Gymnasium to play. The boys stood round the field wearing their sweaters, their fists in their pockets, cheering hoarsely at the game which the workmen were fighting out among themselves. These boys from the Gymnasium, also, were feeling in the mood for mischief. So, too, were the young workmen. They rushed about on the slippery grass with their uncouth seventeen-year-old limbs; they hacked and shoved each other, and a left-wing forward was knocked down so violently that he remained on the ground unable to get up, and they had to drag him off to his mother, old Frau Psamatis, who lived at the lower Mill Wall. She was crying when she went off to fetch Doctor Persenthein, for whom she felt a kind of professional attachment.

On Sunday evening arrived Frau Fobianke. On his own responsibility Müller, the chauffeur, went to fetch her at the station in an empty delivery car. She brought with her her brother, Pank, who was a foreman electri-

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cian. She was a little woman, no longer young, older, at any rate, than her dead husband. She was tight-lipped and unprepossessing. She was quite dazed, as though frozen with fright and grief. She looked as though she could not move her hands, her lips, or her eyes, and she hardly spoke a word when Frau Müller met her at the factory gate and led her into the house. She was wearing a dark dress, which was not black, but dark brown; before her departure she had ripped off its coloured embroidery, so that strangely threadbare, crumpled and pin-pricked patches were visible on her collar and sleeves. She wore black gloves, a cotton imitation of suède, and from time to time she stared down at her stiffly folded and mummified hands as though at some completely strange object. Even when she was left alone for a few moments in the candle light and funereal atmosphere of Shed No. 3, she remained in tearless anguish, unable to pray or to weep, or to find any human relief for her sorrow. Only when she lay down in the double bed next to Frau Müller, she said: "The sheets here are damp, too. Just as with us." Where was her home? Frau Müller asked, while she turned off the light, and her question was answered in the dark: "Neubrandenburg." Then Frau Fobianke lay absolutely still, as though she were holding her breath because it hurt her to breathe—and that was pretty much the case. Then, a little later, Frau Müller stretched across her hand, and, after a little while, Frau Fobianke's fingers came through the darkness and held hers. Their hard, chilled fingers grew gradually warm while the two women went to sleep.

The men were still sitting in the kitchen in front of two short glasses, filled with the light local wine, discussing Fobianke's death. Müller gave his account in the picturesque dialect of Rhenish Hesse with its diffuse and

primitive phrases, and the electrician from Berlin listened, uttering only an occasional monosyllable. Pank was a careful man, as shown by the fact that he had brought an imperishable wreath made of glass beads. He knew, furthermore, that Herr Karbon had insured his chauffeur's life for five thousand marks, and he was cognisant of the fact that, for the present, his chauffeur's death had been kept a secret from Herr Karbon, which he, Pank, considered an exaggerated precaution. Pank was a small man with a gnome-like expression, and a grey beard, which grew all over his face so that only his eyes were visible, and these eyes behind his pince-nez were restless and wistful like an animal's. It gradually became apparent that Pank, the foreman electrician, was a very well read man, a character and a thinker, and a rather important wheel in his party's machine. He was so accustomed to thinking politically, that he soon changed the subject from his private affairs, painful and important as they were, and began to discuss more general topics. By eleven o'clock in the evening he had extracted from Müller all the essential facts concerning the Accumulator Factory, and in spite of his dejection, he became violently excited over the fact that in the Obanger factory the pay for piece-work had been reduced. It was a point to which he kept constantly referring, although Müller could only give him scrappy information, for he had grown out of the workmen's class and for several years had been working at a special job at a special rate of pay.

He finally promised the electrician that the next evening he would get the members of the workmen's council together at Oertchen's beer-shop. Pank made a few notes in a penny note-book, and immediately expressed the wish to send another telegram to some unspecified party organisation or other in Berlin. A telegram could not, of course, be sent from Lohwinkel at eleven o'clock



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at night, for the post office was shut and the clerk, Herr Munk, had been asleep for a long time. So the two men went to bed too. Pank was as thoughtful and taciturn as before when he went to bed in the little spare room, while Müller went to the garage where he simply lay down in Herr Profet's closed car. He went to sleep feeling that since the accident on the Dösswald Road something had been set in motion which, heretofore, had been as firmly set in its foundations as the City Wall or the Angermann Tower.

Monday is generally a drowsy, cheerless day, on which it is difficult to wind up the machinery which drives on working men. But nothing of the sort on this particular Monday! When the men from Obanger arrived at the factory they were in remarkably high spirits and feverishly excited. Some of them were accompanied by their wives. The gate to the factory was unlocked—naturally it was unlocked, because people had to walk and drive in and out of it. A wreath for Fobianke arrived. Herr Profet had sent it—and this wreath, by the way, had come, not from the Estate, but from a flower shop in Dösswald. By noon the factory yard was again crowded with people who did not belong there. This really would not do; factory discipline suffered from this sort of thing. Birkner, the foreman, himself felt that this could not go on. So he deserted his foundry and came down into the yard, where he talked to the people, who crowded round him expectantly. They were expecting something, they knew not what. They had heard that a man from Berlin was there, who had said that everything in Lohwinkel must be changed. Birkner, who after a short talk with Pank had begun to be excited himself, shook his head. He had very little control over the crowds standing inside the yard and outside along the wall. The men employed in

the factory were at work. The reaction chamber was heavy with sulphuric acid vapours ; in the assembly shop the grid plates rattled down from their piles. The greasers were working with lead-oxide, in the forwarding department finished storage batteries were being piled up.

The jostling crowd in the yard consisted of stray people from Obanger, the poorer classes of Lohwinkel, unskilled workers, unemployed craftsmen looking for work, and the wives, children and parents of men who earned too little. They wanted to see the dead chauffeur ; but they wanted, too, to see the living man from Berlin, who had said that everything must change and that these dog's wages must cease. So they stood there and waited.

Finally, Herr Profet arrived. He sent the crowd away and gave orders that the gate was to be locked. He was obliged to repeat his orders three times before they pushed their way out, and a few grumbled rather loudly as they left. Lungaus, who had started work again that very morning, and was just crossing the yard with a reaction plate on his shoulder, stood still and pulled a sneering face, not, be it said, at Herr Profet, who was giving these orders, but at the people who were allowing themselves to be thrown out. They, of course, felt that he was sneering at them and his look continued to worry them while they remained standing outside the wall. Finally, two empty beer bottles were flung over the wall, but they did not hit anyone and were probably only thrown as a joke.

Herr Profet had come over from Priel by car with his guest, Franz Albert, by his side, for he wanted to show the boxer his factory. Albert had quite recovered from his nervous shock ; he looked fit and well-groomed, and Frau Profet had seen that his torn sports coat was mended. As he walked through the workshops, looking like an embarrassed cherub, he would have liked to talk to the workers, but he could not understand their dialect. He

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remained longer in the foundry than in the other shops, he shook his head smilingly, took a lattice-plate in his hand and turned it backwards and forwards, smiling again. He finally murmured that his father had been an iron turner.

By one o'clock the news that the boxer was at the factory had spread to the Gymnasium, and shortly after half-past one the boys, from the lowest form upwards, rushed out in droves, for this was entirely their affair, and it was of enormous importance for them to see the German middle-weight champion face to face. Profet's sons, Paul and Otto, led the way. They had made the entire school wild with excitement with their reports about their guest, Franz Albert, whom they had got to know so intimately at home. With their disproportionately big feet, they all tramped towards the factory, among them twelve-year-old soprano angels, fifth-form boys with pimples and broken voices, and wise young men with bass voices from the top form. The pandemonium round the factory increased. The street near Profet's property had no name; it was simply called "near the wall." And near the wall there was, shortly after two o'clock, a first-class fight between the boys from Obanger and the boys from the Gymnasium. True, these fights between the boys from Obanger and the boys from the Gymnasium were by no means rare; they are, in fact, in accordance with the best Lohwinkel tradition. But on this particular Monday the fight was exceptionally fierce and sharp, and was waged with a peculiar bitterness, so that, it was said, even the bigger boys took part in it and exchanged blows. None of them, by the way, was able to see the boxer after all, for Herr Profet left the factory with him on foot by the back entrance, which, incidentally, led to that part of the road where Fobianke had lost his way so badly on the evening of the accident.



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Franz Albert recognised the place vaguely, like something he had seen in a dream ; the nettles in the ditch by the side of the road had such a pungent smell. He also recalled how unpleasant it had been to sit under the rug with Lania, and as he remembered this incident, he felt a tingling sensation along his spine ; as though curious blisters were breaking out on him.

"Are those grape vines ?" he asked glancing at the slaty hills next to the road. Now, in daylight, the foliage on the vines looked russet-red.


"Yes, vineyards. These here are nothing particular," said Herr Profet, and he stopped, picked a small, green bunch of little fragile grapes from one of the vines and held it out to the boxer on the palm of his hand. "But farther down, towards the Rhine, there are some other vines, Sonnentreppchen they are called, which are wonderful."

"Do they all belong to you ?" the boxer asked, as he took the grapes.

"To me ? No, they belong to the Estate," replied the manufacturer, as he resumed the walk. A little later—when Albert had already forgotten the subject of their conversation—he added : "Well, as a matter of fact—actually they do belong to me. It all depends on me whether these Raitzolds can carry on or not. Do you understand what I mean ?"

And then he did not say another word till they reached the station where Müller had come to meet them with the car.

Nothing more actually happened on this Monday, except that Doctor Persenthein had a queer argument with Fobianke's widow. She remained as puzzled, as frozen, and as inarticulate as ever, while he talked with a heated and stormy eagerness. Briefly, it was a question of an autopsy on the body. The doctor would have given



anything to be able to examine it and confirm his diagnosis of a rupture of the liver. He persisted stubbornly against Frau Fobianke's blank refusals, and, finally, he adduced as an argument certain regulations concerning autopsies after accidents. All Frau Fobianke knew was that fate had been cruel to her husband as it was, and she felt that the peaceful corpse would begin to scream if anyone harmed him further. She could not express this feeling. She only said "No," and "no," and again "no." Doctor Persenthein rattled off on his motor-cycle in a bad temper, with Rehle behind him on the pillion-seat, and rode out to the Estate to see Leore Lania. He had been restless, discontented and depressed ever since the accident, he did not know why. The people on the road stood still, watched him pass, and said things about him ; but he did not know what they were saying.

And then there was Pank, the foreman electrician, who had had a few brief conversations on this Monday morning. He had had one with Herr Karbon, who was wearing the striped silk pyjamas which had so embittered Lungaus. Karbon turned pale and felt deadly ill, when he heard of his chauffeur's accident, which, so far, had been kept secret from him. He had not yet regained his usual nervous stability. Frau Persenthein stood by him and rubbed his forehead sympathetically with eau de Cologne. Doctor Persenthein cursed loudly when he came home and found that his tall red-haired patient was suffering from a slight nervous breakdown. The foreman electrician, in the meantime, had gone on his way, had made arrangements for the funeral with Herr Curvier, had gone out to Priel, had interrupted Herr Profet's afternoon coffee and had talked with him until evening. Then he went to the post office, just before closing time, and sent off a telegram with reference to the fact that in Obanger piece-work pay had been reduced.

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From there he proceeded to Oertchen's beer-shop, where he met the members of the works council.

On Tuesday afternoon at three o'clock was the funeral of Wilhelm Fobianke. But the church bells began to ring at two o'clock, for the burial of the dead farm-hand, Jacob Wirz. They rang out again when the procession following Herr Curvier's black and silver carriage began to move forward out of the factory yard ; this was an act of courtesy towards the deceased on the part of the old vicar. Frau Fobianke sat with her brother and Frau Müller in a carriage draped in black ; the rest of the workmen followed on foot. It had been raining since the night, and deep footprints, filled with water, were to be found everywhere in the soft ground of the cemetery. The rain oozed down darkly into the freshly opened grave. The wind whistled from the east, and the rain-drops hung slanting in the air like strands of thread.

The fact that the workmen were following the coffin was due to very special circumstances. It was the middle of their working day, and they had come despite the fact that Herr Profet had forbidden them to do so. Herr Profet had been in a dilemma and had considered the matter for a long time ; he had then discussed it with Birkner and Pank, and finally he had refused to let the workmen go. He had been prompted more by fear than by unkindness. Herr Profet had been a working man himself at one time, and he knew what was happening. "There is something in the air," he said later to his wife, wiping a little perspiration from his round shaven head. "Something will happen, if I don't show them who is the master," he told Franz Albert, drumming his fingers against the window-pane. Then he had wandered into the nursery, and finally he made his decision.

His decision was a mistake. The workmen refused to accept it. At one o'clock they stopped working and went



home. Those who owned black coats put them on, and then they returned to the factory with a sullen, wronged expression on their faces. Herr Profet was henceforth their enemy. But the chauffeur from Berlin, whom they had only known since his death, was their friend and relative. The evangelical pastor from Dösswald said a few wooden words, for Herr Pank had objected to a long sermon, and then six of the workmen carried the coffin out of Shed No. 3.

The funeral had become so much an affair of the workmen that the middle-class people from Lohwinkel kept their distance. They stood in the streets, hung out of their windows, and encircled the cemetery wall with their umbrellas, but they did not join in the procession.

The few farm-hands from the Estate (there were twenty-three of them, with Jacob Wirz's relatives) had remained in the cemetery so as not to miss the enjoyment of a second funeral. Herr von Raitzold, who met the procession at the cemetery gate, got into his carriage quickly and drove away ; but his sister, wearing her high riding boots and a black mackintosh, took up her position firmly on the muddy ground near the grave next to the mourners and Doctor Persenthein. For Doctor Persenthein was attending the funeral. It was not pleasant to be burying two patients on the same day, but it was like Doctor Persenthein not to run away when things were unpleasant. He stood there in the rain, looking at the expressionless faces of the people from Obanger, who were so agitated underneath their outward calm, and he worried all the time about his unconfirmed diagnosis of a rupture of the liver, while the pastor did his duty standing by the wet, open grave, yellow with mud. Herr Profet was absent ; so, too, was Herr Karbon, for Persenthein had strictly forbidden him to come. The boys from the Gymnasium, on the other hand, were present,

from the lowest forms upwards. They did not really know themselves why they had come. Probably it was merely because "Putex" had forbidden it. The spirit of rebellion and insubordination had spread from the workmen to the youth of Lohwinkel.

Strangely enough, Herr Markus, too, had come to the cemetery. He was wearing a black suit, a top hat and black gloves. He moved about once or twice, but there always seemed to be a little circle of empty air round him, and he stood there quite by himself.

The funeral thus took its monotonous course under a blanket of rustling rain and chiming bells. The pastor said a few words about the fact that this Wilhelm Fobianke had died as a victim of his vocation, and then he threw into the grave a little wet earth. Herr Pank took from him the little trowel, and did the same, with the same words. But everything that Pank did was more resonant, more emphatic and more exciting. As he stood there, his gnome-like face, usually so silent and thoughtful, grew more expansive, for he was assuming the attitude of the experienced public speaker that he was, and when he pronounced the word "victim," it took on another meaning. As was to be expected, he did not call the people round the grave "honoured mourners," but "comrades," and everyone in the crowd felt that he, personally, was singled out by this word and included in some sort of fellowship. Suddenly, Herr Markus, who was standing in the background, felt, for no reason at all, two isolated tears smarting in his clever, short-sighted and resigned eyes. Then the foreman electrician handed the trowel to his sister.

The little cemetery was overcrowded, and, at this moment, everyone pressed forward. Some of the people got up on to the mounds of the graves. Frau Fobianke stepped up to the three wreaths, broke off a few clayey



pieces of earth with Herr Curvier's help, and threw them down into the grave.

She gave a deep sigh; her mind was quite blank; she was completely perplexed. She remained standing there for a moment, looked down into the open grave, and then gazed round into the faces of strangers. In the end, Frau Müller pulled her away from the grave. The crowd began to shuffle and splash about with their feet. The pastor and, after him, Herr Birkner shook hands with the widow. Frau Fobianke stared round her.

"Where is Herr Müller?" she asked.

"He couldn't come, he's at work," Frau Müller said softly. She took Frau Fobianke's hand into her own and drew her gently away from the grave.

"Oh—he's at work——" Frau Fobianke said, after she had walked away for a few paces. Then she stood still. "He's at work——"

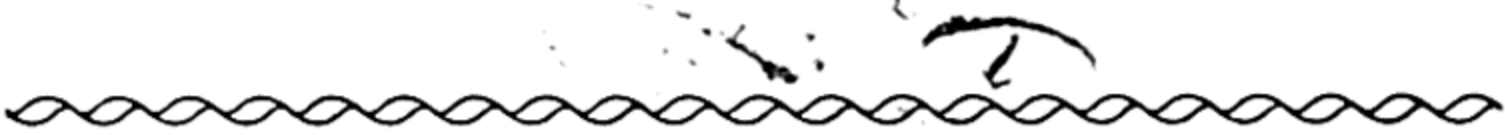
"He had to drive Herr Profet to Schaffenburg," Frau Müller declared in dialect.

Frau Fobianke looked around her. "Why? What has happened? How has all this happened?" she asked, and now, suddenly, she realised for the first time what it was that had happened. She realised that she was standing in a strange cemetery, in a strange part of Germany, that her husband was dead, that he had left her, that he had so completely died that he would never be near her again. Something within her broke, as a sheet of ice cracks over a lake. Suddenly, she gave such a loud and piercing cry that everyone rushed towards the grave in fright.

"No," Frau Fobianke cried out. "No. No. No!"

Her vocabulary was limited, so she could only cry "No," in her effort to ward it off. In three big, wild strides she reached the grave, she flung herself down, almost into the grave itself. Convulsively she clutched the wreaths. She clutched Frau Müller's skirt, she





clutched Doctor Persenthein's legs, and screamed her desperate "No," protesting against everything that had happened. Her mad cry, like that of some animal, a mixture of laughter and sobs and a long, shrill wail, was contagious. The men gritted their teeth and clenched their fists without knowing that they were doing so. The women wept. A few of them, Frau Psamatis, Frau Kobbele and others, joined in this wild lamentation. The boys from the Gymnasium, too, were weeping, for only yesterday they had been children, and their souls were still unhardened. The agitation by the graveside spread in waves over the entire cemetery. A psychosis—thought Herr Markus, though he was weeping himself, and his sensitive nerves shuddered at the sound of the woman's screams. Pank, the foreman electrician, tried to raise his sister from the ground ; but he was small and her bones were heavy, and she did not wish to leave the grave, not for a long time. Her cries remained hanging over the cemetery when the church bells had ceased to ring. The people from Obanger left the cemetery in agitated groups.

It was Fräulein von Raitzold who finally got the woman back to the funeral carriage. This good lady had in her a great reserve of strength, and the knack of handling human beings and animals. She quieted the widow just as she would have quieted a runaway horse. Frau Müller, with her tear-stained face, which looked like the face of a Madonna roughly carved in wood, did the rest.

"Let her cry ; it is a relief for her to cry," said Fräulein von Raitzold afterwards, as she tramped along the well-worn cemetery paths next to Doctor Persenthein.

The doctor, occupied with his own thoughts as usual, did not answer. "Anyone who can still cry, is all right," Fräulein von Raitzold added, not to him, but to herself. Her whole life was expressed in this one sentence. . . .

But the widow Fobianke's cry, this mad "No," remained hanging over Lohwinkel like a storm. The town had changed, and so had the people in it.

That evening a meeting was held in Oertchen's beer-shop. Pank and Birkner spoke, and urged all the younger workmen to call a strike.

That evening the little quince tree in Head Master "Putex's" front garden was hewn down, and on his fence was hung a sign, with the word "revenge" scrawled in red paint.

That evening Lungaus, who for three years had followed Doctor Persenthein's regime, was found, dead drunk, on a wet pile of leaves next to the duck pond behind the church.

Peter Karbon sat in the easy chair in the living-room. His chin was raised, his head rested against the back of the chair, and his beautifully shaped lips showed an expression of complete and absolute contentment.

"That was lovely—thank you," he said to Elisabeth, who had stopped playing a moment before. Her hands were resting on her lap. She turned her head towards him over her shoulder.

"Mozart," she said.

Doctor Persenthein had instructed her to look after Karbon while the funeral lasted. She had played the piano to him so that he would not hear the church bells.

"Strange that you should find time for music; it's really touching," Peter said, looking at her throat, which rose so steeply from her white collar to her ear. Lately she had been wearing her dark blue dress, her best dress with the white lace trimming.

"Yes—we play a lot of music, of course. There are no concerts here, and one can't live without music."

"Can't live without it?" he asked absent-mindedly.

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"I don't hear any music for years and I get along quite well without it. Jazz, of course, and music of that kind—but not what you call music. At last, those bells have stopped ringing," he added, which caused Elisabeth's left eyebrow to twitch slightly.

So he had heard the church bells after all——

"Don't you go to concerts? I'd be mad with joy if I could hear the concerts you can hear in Berlin——"

"Yes, curious, isn't it? A person like myself seems to get to the South Seas more easily than to a concert."

"Markus has a very good wireless set. And sometimes he invites me to come and listen in, when I have time—last week I heard the St. Matthew Passion music. Markus doesn't miss anything that's broadcast from Berlin."

"Who is Markus? Oh, I know, that funny little man who asked me so many questions, so that he could send reports to some newspapers."

"Is he funny?"

"Of course he is. A regular type. An unrecognised genius behind his sugar sacks."

"Oh?" said Frau Persenthein; for, during the last few days, she had discarded many notions which had formerly seemed precious. So now Markus was to be discarded too.

"Odd people seem to thrive in your climate. Your husband is odd in his own way, too."

Elisabeth played an F-Minor chord and let the sound die away. The upper tones vibrated delicately for a long time in the old wood of the ceiling.

"Didn't you know that he is?" Karbon asked.

"Oh, yes," she said, after a little pause.

A little cloud of mortar fell from the walls. Below, in the street, under the Angermann Tower, the funeral carriage was taking Frau Fobianke back to the factory. Elisabeth stepped over to the window. The glass was



dimmed by the rain. Karbon enjoyed watching her walk, but he also enjoyed watching her when she stood still. He knew her step, wherever she happened to be in the Angermann House. He enjoyed this feeling of weariness that his convalescence gave him; he felt muffled up as though in a pillow.

"I am as at home with you as though you were my childhood's nurse," he said to her.

She came over to him, stood behind his chair and looked down on him. "Are you all right?" she asked, smiling.

"Since the time when I was wheeled about in my perambulator, I have never felt as well as here, with you," he said, blinking a little as he met her smile. But he could not bear it for long, and he finally closed his eyes as though he were faced with a light which was too strong. Elisabeth, bending over his closed eyelids, grew serious, and gazed at his face with rapt attention. The house was quiet, and smelt of warm yeast: a peaceful Sunday smell, though it was actually Tuesday. Since the accident, something had been baked every day in the Angermann House, in a mad disregard of the meagre family budget. The fact that Frau Doktor Persenthein had begun to run into debt at the butcher's, the baker's and the dairy, was symptomatic of the disintegration in Lohwinkel.

Rehle appeared at the door. "Fifty minutes, mother," she announced, and disappeared again at once. She was making mourning dresses for her doll, because there was a funeral, and Lungaus had stuffed her hazelnut head with confused tales about Frau Fobianke.

"I'll come at once, darling," Elisabeth said, following her.

"Please stay here——" Peter implored her in a child-like manner.

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“I’ll come back—I must look after my cake——” she said, running away.

Immediately after she had left, Karbon felt cold. He often felt cold, and the doctor had decided that this was due to his nerves. But there was no obvious reason why he should feel warm when the doctor’s wife was near him. “To-morrow, I must see how Pretty is getting on,” he thought, but this was only a secondary thought which left him again at once, as it had done several times before. “I must finish writing that letter to Michael,” he thought as well, taking a half-finished letter and his fountain-pen from his pocket. Michael was his brother, the senior partner in the tyre works, and, since the morning, Peter had been pushing forward that letter, like a wheelbarrow full of stones.

“... and I note that to-day my business letters have been forwarded for the first time,” he read. “First of all, I must ask you to postpone my conference with the Russians, for I cannot leave here yet. I agree that, somehow or other, we must try to fit these tricky Russian bounders into our international rubber cartel, and I have persuaded Kröningk and Octave Farin that this must be done. If old Farin makes a fuss, I’ll go to Paris by air for half a day and talk to him. But, please, don’t arrange a conference before the twentieth, because I want to stay here until then in any case. I am feeling quite well, but I have a ridiculous fear complex about driving; it is silly, but I can’t overcome it. The doctor thinks that it will soon pass. You will have heard, in the meantime, that our poor Fobianke is dead. This idiot of a doctor kept his death from me for two or three days; in the meantime a lot of things have been bungled, and it wasn’t any the more pleasant for me to hear this news three days later. I am writing to Kellermann by the

same post, so that the office will do everything necessary for Frau Fobianke."

He shook his fountain-pen, hesitated a little, and then went on writing quickly :

" This place, where we have been landed, is extraordinarily beautiful ; an old church, old towers, old city walls. The people are much more interesting and much more reserved than in Berlin ; not so standardised. They read high-brow books, are fond of music, and I have already discovered that the men are anything but stupid and the women strangely reposeful. I have found a foster-mother, who looks like a girl of eighteen, but must be older, for she has been married a long time. She is good for my shaken nerves, and for her sake I am putting up with her ramshackle household. The bed is uncomfortable, the food poor, everything poverty-stricken. Her husband is a queer fish, a real German cross-patch. But there is just a chance that this doctor may know his job. I sometimes feel a sort of friendship for this strange creature, even though I can't bear him.

" I think we have a wrong conception of provincial towns. They are different from what we, who live round the Gedächtniskirche, think they are. I am not writing you this as a philosophical note, but because it is important, from the point of view of our advertising campaigns, for us to know these towns—I am keeping my eyes and my ears open and shall discuss the matter with Flemming on my return. You see that, with or without a nervous shock, I am the same. I am lazy, but ideas go on working within me, while I myself do nothing.

" Our poor Fobianke is being buried as I write this.



I could weep at the thought that we have lost this good fellow. The other two——”

“The other two? Well, and what about them?” he thought reluctantly. They had moved an incredible distance away from him, these other two. He suddenly gave up writing any more, pushed the letter away and concentrated all his thoughts on Elisabeth.

Music—he thought. How on earth shall I arrange that? I can’t import Furtwängler and the Philharmonic Orchestra into Lohwinkel. A wireless set must, therefore, be ordered. Such contraptions were now being manufactured. A twelve-valve set, then she could hear Paris and London, if she felt like it—but no. He would simply take her to Berlin and drag her to concerts. They could go to a different one every evening until she had had enough. It was touching the way she played Mozart on her old piano. She would, of course, have to be dressed properly, before she was taken to concerts. She would be easy to dress, so slim and long-limbed. Perhaps she was a little too slim, like a drawing on the frontispiece of a fashion magazine. A little rouge on her cheeks, something like black velvet and a little ermine round her neck——

Peter Karbon lost himself in his thoughts of an Elisabeth wearing black velvet and happily listening to a Beethoven Symphony. Could she dance, he wondered next, without any connection with his former thoughts. He himself was passionately fond of dancing, and he danced extraordinarily well. “The art of gliding” was Leore Lania’s name for his manner of making his way softly and diagonally on the dancing floor. Peter grew a little dizzy as he pictured to himself a dancing Frau Persenthein. But, when she herself returned, she was not at all like the picture he had made of her in his excited

brain. She was wearing a large apron and carried a coal scuttle in front of her. She knelt down in front of the stove and began, in a concentrated and serious manner, to re-make the fire, which was very low.

Karbon looked at her thoughtfully as she squatted in front of the stove and wiped her hands on her apron. This sight probably made him realise dimly for the first time what kind of a life Frau Persenthein led.

"Your life isn't an easy one, either——" he said gently.

Elisabeth recognised with a passing alarm that he used the phrase which haunted her like a ghost. But in Karbon's mouth this phrase assumed a new and strange meaning. Easy? Easy——? No, it isn't, she thought. And at that all the hardships and burdens of her existence seemed to weigh down upon her: the basket full of linen, which had to be darned, the cobwebs in the storeroom, the household money, the precarious practice, Lungaus, who was always so difficult, Nick, who was always absent-minded and hurried and moody—and the fact that she would never be able to escape from these burdens, which would surround her for ever. Well, what of it? she thought, almost immediately: it's all as it should be.


"I—oh—I'm all right——" she said, letting the last shovelful of coal rattle into the fire.

Karbon folded his hands, rested his elbows on the sides of the chair, and sank back comfortably. "I had forgotten how pretty a stove like that can be," he said sleepily.

"Why? Isn't your home heated?" Elisabeth asked.

"Central heating, of course," he said. When he half-closed his eyes, he could see the rays again, which he had always seen as a child before going to sleep.

"Oh, of course——" Elisabeth said, looking at her blackened fingers. The thought of a home with central heating seemed to her like paradise. Her struggle with smoking stoves, with dirty coal, with stairs, which were



blackened by the coal, with scuttles she could hardly carry, with coal bills, which they could not pay, and with fires, which would go out, were important factors in her life. "The Profets have central heating, too——" she added, as though this announcement would enhance her in Karbon's eyes. The stove began its evening song; the little barred door with its black ornaments stood out against the flames. For Peter Karbon, everything in the room was filled with childhood's memories. Elisabeth rose, and shook out her apron.

"Excuse me for looking like this. It's because the work is so dirty——" she said, coming over to him as she untied and took off her apron.

Now she will go over to the dresser and take out that old tablecloth with the fringe, Karbon thought dreamily, while she was already doing so. She was already passing him on her way through the room. He must have lived this life before, because he knew what would happen next. He stretched out his arms and took hold of her skirt. He grasped her best dark blue dress a little above her knee, and pulled her towards him.

Later, whenever Peter Karbon recalled this strange moment—as he did for two or three months afterwards—he understood it all and could explain to himself perfectly why this almost mad desire had seized upon him. It was the apron, which she had taken off, the smell of starch, of smoke from the stove, and of yeast; it was this smell of cleanliness, of industry and of fatigue, this familiar smell of the maid-servant, which he remembered from the days of his first love-affair as a schoolboy, which intoxicated him to the point of senselessness. But at that moment he was not aware of all this. He was only conscious, with extraordinary lucidity, of the delight it gave him to feel Elisabeth's shoulder blades, as his arms closed round her



slender back, and he knew that it was not the long-forgotten lips of Betty, the chambermaid, which first refused him and then opened meltingly and surrendered to him.

Frau Doktor Persenthein, who had plunged desperately into this kiss, as though from some high bridge into a river, was the first to save herself from drowning. She stood up again, though her knees were heavy. More than ever she looked like a figure from some gothic tomb, whereas Peter's eyes were still shut and his mouth, so like a Roman emperor's, was still raised open towards her as towards some unknown fount. He recovered himself quickly, however, and sensibly withdrew his hands and rested them on the arms of the chair. With a fleeting smile, he said : " How silly we have been ! I must be still a little weak in the head——"

Frau Persenthein switched on the light and left the room. She escaped to the kresol vapours of the bath-rooms below, which the last patient had just left.

The spider, Katrinchen, looking very well nourished, sat in her corner and contemplated the woman, as with frenzied energy she began to scrub the bath tubs, weeping all the time, as though she had been beaten . . .

It was twenty minutes past eleven, on this particular evening, that Lungaus, completely drunk, was brought back to the Angermann House. The doctor dragged him up the stairs, and Elisabeth took off his coat and boots, before they put him to bed. Shortly before midnight the bell rang again, because one of the young unemployed and a farmhand from the Estate had come to blows after the meeting at Oertchen's beer-shop, and now they had both come to have their wounds dressed. Peter Karbon, who had already been asleep, was awakened by the stir downstairs. He awoke with a strange feeling of lightness and pleasure, and he smiled even before he had opened his

eyes. A dream—as dreams often do—had lessened the distance between him and Elisabeth. When he fell asleep, she was more or less a stranger to him ; but now, when he awoke, shortly before midnight, she seemed very close ; it was as though the hovering and elusive content of his dream had been wonderfully warm and full of promise. I'm in love—very much in love—he thought contentedly, as in the dark his hands rubbed the quilted pattern of the cheap red woollen blanket on the Persentheins' bed. Then he fell asleep again.

Downstairs, in the meantime, Doctor Persenthein was pacing round the operating chair in the waiting-room. He ran his fingers through his thin light hair, and his long face had the vicious expression of a shying horse. He had attended to the two brawlers. His white overall was slightly spotted with blood, and he was waiting for hot water. At night all these arrangements seemed to go wrong. In the meantime, he smoked a cheap cigarette and inhaled the smoke deep into his lungs.

“ Aren't you tired, Nick ? ” Elisabeth asked. She had come with a pillow under her arm to make up his bed on the oilcloth divan. Her tear-stained face and the little red tip of her nose made her look like a Botticelli Madonna. She bravely shook the pillow into shape, but she felt as though she were in the midst of earthquakes and catastrophes. Since that kiss, she had been unable to stop trembling even for a moment. Every object which she touched, quivered and shook and clattered, dangerously. Nick declared that he was not tired—but when had Nick ever admitted that he was tired ? He looked with disgust at his temporary bed, with its sheets continually slipping out of place on the shiny oilcloth, and said :

“ Do you think it is very inviting to sleep here ? ”

“ It's you who don't want us to send him—Herr Karbon—anywhere else,” Elisabeth answered.

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Until this afternoon Karbon had been the property of the doctor ; he was his patient and under his treatment. Now, all of a sudden, she felt responsible for him. She realised this, and her guilty conscience made her feel hot and alarmed.

"Everything is topsy-turvy," the doctor continued. He was exactly expressing Elisabeth's own thoughts, and, for that matter, the feelings of everyone in Lohwinkel : everything was in a state of dissolution, fever and confusion. "The surgery hours were missed to-day, you'll see what crowds of people will troop in here to-morrow. Something is going on at the works, to-morrow they'll all be coming here and wanting to be certified as ill, so that they won't have to work. And here I sit with no time to get on with my own work—can I have some coffee?"

"Oh, yes, of course," Elisabeth said, and the way she spoke surprised the doctor for a passing moment. She would gladly have shown him all kinds of affectionate attention ; for she was still carrying that kiss within her as an overwhelming, unprecedented and deeply poisoned sweetness. As the doctor passed by his desk, his attention was held by a piece of writing paper, half covered with his large flowing handwriting. Pages of notes, card-index boxes, boxes with slips for notes, and various case histories circled round the work which devoured his nights, his energy, his thoughts and his whole being. He knew that the material he had collected was incomplete. His use of words was awkward, and he knocked his square skull against distorted sentences.

"The absorption of water and its disturbing influence through an unverified compensation by breathing that goes on through the skin has been investigated on patients experimentally, with measurable results," he read. No, it was not a good, concise sentence. He drew a fat,



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scratchy line through the sentence. Elisabeth came back from the kitchen with the coffee-mill, which she placed patiently between her knees. As she did so her shoulders fell forward a little. The doctor glanced towards her without really seeing her. "The results, based on previous experiments conducted on patients, show that breathing through the skin——" he was thinking.

"Nick," Elisabeth called to him softly.

Sometimes when he stared at her like that, as though he were looking through her at the walls, she felt that she was transparent like a ghost. To-day she felt something like bitterness at the thought. When a woman is looked at in the way he looked at her, there is nothing left for her but to dry up and wither ; and now, this no longer seemed to her such a matter of course as it had seemed before. Holy Mary, Mother of God, she felt that she, too, was capable of blooming——

The coffee-mill creaked, the smell of coffee rose in the air, the doctor's water had boiled, and he was washing his hands.

"This pestilential creature—this Lungaus——" he said furiously. "These experimental rabbits—they booze and come home with dirty wounded skulls and later, if a sepsis sets in, it's all my fault." Then he pulled open the window, and the night rushed in with its sharp cold. "Frost—I wonder what will happen to-morrow," he said, letting his thoughts wander on. Elisabeth came and went, the coffee cup clinked. Lungaus' drunkenness was a catastrophe ; she had not immediately and fully realised its importance. More important things had happened to-day, pushing themselves between her and the routine of the Angermann House.

"Don't get upset," she said mechanically. But even as she spoke she felt a resistance against her pity. What is this Lungaus to me ? Why should I be grieved and

annoyed because of him? she thought. She had vaguely felt all this before, but hitherto it had merely seemed like a burden which she could not understand. Now everything was suddenly clear. She looked round; her eyelids, still tender from weeping, tingled and felt cold round the rims as though there were still tears in her eyes. She glanced at Nick's shoulder longingly, wishing that she could rest her head against it and find peace. But Nick did not please her now, she did not like him at all. She took up the white pail filled with bloodstained bits of cotton wool and carried it out of the room. One is terribly alone, when anything real happens, she thought.

His wife had barely left the room, when the doctor again relapsed into his work: "through a compensation brought about by a process of breathing through the skin, which cannot be verified, this development has been tested on patients——" well, and what next? If the person, on whom he experimented, got drunk like a pig—he was sick of it all, sick of the whole thing, he was tired, tired, tired. Don't be upset, Nick. You must go to bed, Nick. You should not smoke so much, Nick. Women simply had no understanding beyond that. Try to make a woman understand what a man's Idea means to him . . .

The doctor closed the window, coughed, and, as he coughed, quickly inhaled tobacco smoke into his lungs. Elisabeth came back with the clean pail. A thousand times she had carried in and out this pail filled with waste cotton wool, soaked with blood and pus. This time, ten minutes before midnight, when she was so abnormally awake, so over-excited, she suddenly felt she was in a dream, as though she were moving about with this pail for ever, and ever, and ever. She crossed the threshold as though she were crossing an abyss, a glacier crevasse which had suddenly yawned beneath her.

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“Has the money been sent off?” Doctor Persenthein asked.

“What money?”

“The fifty marks for the Pantostat apparatus.”

“Yes,” Elisabeth said. She had meant to say “No,” but she said “Yes” none the less. Immediately after she had spoken she was terribly frightened. She had never lied before. True, married life depends upon maintaining a balance, keeping one’s own counsel, on refraining from saying things—marriage always demands the finest arts of insincerity possible between two human beings. But now, for the first time, she had told a downright lie to Nick. Heaven only knew what would happen next, considering the entangled and confused turn everything seemed to be taking. Elisabeth stood there, stiff with fear, looking at Doctor Persenthein’s forehead. Wrinkles—she followed them in her mind—they swung upwards over his right eyebrow and downwards over the left one—wrinkles—she had not seen them before—and he was only thirty-five—she must talk to Markus—or to Karbon——

Even though Elisabeth had lied, the doctor caught some of her inexpressed thoughts, as so often happens between married people.

“I suppose we’ve run up all kinds of debt? Things have probably got frightfully muddled during the last few days?” he asked over his coffee cup, and then he looked Elisabeth straight in the face with his penetrating doctor’s look.

When, that afternoon, Frau Persenthein had wept in the bathroom, she felt that she had sobbed away her last tears. But this was not so. A reserve of tears appeared unexpectedly, and while she was fixing her eyes firmly on the doctor, they collected under her eyelashes, first as a shimmer and then as a cool rivulet. The doctor observed



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this phenomenon with slight impatience. He did not like scenes about housekeeping matters, especially after midnight. He cast a worried look at his manuscript. "Go to bed, little one," he said gently.

"Yes," Elisabeth whispered obediently. He came over to her, on the other side of the white enamel chair with the knee rests, and took hold of the smooth hair at the nape of her neck.

"You've had rather a lot to do these last few days, haven't you?" he asked. "And the account books are probably not up to date?"

"Yes, they are——" she whispered; for, prompted by repentance and her guilty conscience, she had got the books straight that evening.

"By the way, where have you been sleeping since His Highness has been occupying the bedroom?" he asked, but his thoughts began to wander away from her again at once.

"With Rehle, in the little room," she answered from the door. "Don't work too long, Nick——"

The doctor wrinkled his forehead as he bent over his notes. "In the little room?" he thought. "Why?" He had a vague idea that there was no bed or divan or any place on which to sleep in the little room—but he had no clear conception of the accommodation in the house. He was one of those men who never know what they are eating, what suit they are wearing or on what chair they are sitting.

"To-morrow Herr Karbon will be turned out. We are not a nursing home," he said suddenly. Elisabeth remained standing at the door.

"All right," she said a moment later. The thought that Karbon would suddenly be gone gave her a wretched pain in her throat, and opened a black void of hopelessness.

"He can go to the Raitzolds, to the Estate, that will be better," the doctor said.

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“ Yes, that will be better,” Elisabeth repeated.

“ He can flirt there with his actress friend. It will do them both good,” the doctor continued. Elisabeth became speechless. She was choking down a sharp, burning and bitter emotion. As she had never been jealous before, she did not recognise it as jealousy. The bottle of sublimate solution was empty again, she thought. She went over, filled the bottle with water, took the box of sublimate pastilles and dropped six of the reddish objects into the solution. She had to do something so as to get over this acute moment.

“ It’s no concern of mine, it’s no concern of mine, it’s no concern of mine——” she kept on thinking.

“ Can I be undisturbed now ? ” the doctor asked, not unkindly, bending over his work.

“ If you’re sending him away on my account—I don’t mind if he stays here. He’s no trouble to me,” Elisabeth said finally.

The doctor turned and looked at her. “ I must examine her lungs soon again,” he thought, because her manner was so feverish. She was still standing there.

“ I mean to say—if it would be difficult for the Raitzolds—I’m glad to nurse him——” she added.

He looked at her, smiling. “ Just like Rehle. You, too, like to nurse sick dolls Well—good night,” he said. This time he turned from her with finality and centred his attention on his experiments with the absorption of water by the body and the unverified breathing through the skin.

Outside in the hall, the woman put her arms round the stair-post as though it had been some living thing. The polished wood soothed her cheek and her hand. Sometimes one was so utterly alone in the world that one sought comfort from inanimate objects. “ You——” she said into boundless space and she did not know herself

whether she meant the sleeping guest or the man who sat working at his desk or the mute piece of oak which was hundreds of years old. . . .

Wednesday morning began with a noisy row between a furious Doctor Persenthein and a Lungaus still drowsy from the fumes of cheap alcohol. Each man abused the other violently, almost grinding his teeth. There was more to it than a mere bout of drunkenness. Lungaus was fighting for his freedom as a man; he couldn't express what he meant, but it went against his manly dignity never to be anything but an object to be experimented upon. For the doctor, on the other hand, everything was again at stake, because his Idea was at stake. The beams on the ceilings all over the house were cracking; the mortar trickled down; the telephone rang to say that the pneumonia case in Priel had died, she was eighty-seven; the telephone rang again to say that Frau Lania would like to know whether the stitches would be taken out to-day; the flush in the lavatory was out of order again. Lungaus had turned his back on Sodom and Gomorrah, he would not go back to work in the factory, nor would he carry up the kindling wood; instead, he lay down on his bed again and dozed away.

Frau Persenthein shovelled what was left of the coal into the kitchen stove. Heavens! she wondered, would Klinkers send any more until the last coal bill was paid for. Cocoa for Herr Karbon. Is Herr Karbon still asleep? No, I've heard him moving about upstairs for a long time. Nick, can't you put right the pump in the cellar. The water is not running? Rehle, run over to Frau Psamatis and ask her to come to 34 Prieler Strasse. I shan't be able to begin the surgery hours before noon to-day—well, good-bye, little one.

Frau Psamatis declined to go to Prieler Strasse to wash the old lady and lay her out solemnly in her coffin clothes.



Frau Psamatis had done this sort of work for forty years ; but now, suddenly, she had become rebellious, and refused to come. Her own boy was ill ; he had not recovered from the blow in the groin from football on Sunday. Frau Psamatis had had enough of the kind of life she had been living ; things must change, her life must become quite different ; people could wash their dead themselves, then they'd see how heavy corpses could be.

Herr Oertchen, of Oertchen's Restaurant, had hung a coloured sign on his fence : " Great Film Showing This Evening. Leore Lania, The World-Famous Actress, In Her Best Film : Adventure in Monte Carlo. With Music. Children under eighteen will not be admitted."

Another such sign was put up at the Angermann Tower underneath Saint George. Herr Oertchen himself took a third sign to the Jew's shop.

But Herr Markus was not present. He happened to be across the road in Herr Kuhammer's barber's shop, where, if you please, he was actually having a manicure.

" Oval or pointed ? " asked the girl with the rouged lips and the doubtful reputation.

" Rather oval, but a little pointed," pronounced Herr Markus.

" Where did you go on Sunday ? " she asked. The tone of her question suggested that she and Herr Markus were on somewhat intimate terms.

" Oh—nowhere—I just worked."

" What at ? Did you write a poem ? " the girl asked, stopping her filing and looking up expectantly at Markus. She had a real feeling for higher things, and here she was, stuck in Lohwinkel.

" Yes—something of the sort," Markus answered haughtily. He was wearing his glasses, he had on a black coat, even though it was so early in the morning, and, to

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put it briefly, he was going out to the Estate to pay his respects to Leore Lania.

"Will you be at the cinema?" the girl asked in her confidential way.

"Possibly. Please polish them a little more. I saw this film a year ago in Berlin——" Herr Markus answered, relapsing again into silence. Even now he could not think of the great city without wanting to weep. To think of those lectures by Fahrenwaldt! To think of the cheap seats in the Deutsches Theater, and the yachts on the Havel on Sunday, and the drives on top of the buses—and all those halls; concert halls, museum halls, library halls. . . .

"Good morning, Herr Behrendt! Good morning, good morning," he said dreamily, as he crossed over to his store on the other side of the road, blissfully unconscious of a number of Lohwinkel's leading citizens.

"He gets more conceited every day," Behrendt, the chemist, remarked to Doctor Ohmann, the mayor, who was taking his dog out for a walk. Herr Doktor Ohmann was the honorary president of the "United" Club. A clever man: he installed the electrical plant in the town and put through the subsidy for enlarging the Gymnasium.

"Do you think so? I've been told that he plays the violin very well. I have been wondering for some time whether we couldn't ask him for our chamber music evenings."

"No—I don't think that would do—although—he is very well educated. But even so——. By the way, how is your daughter? All well, I hope? Her fiancé too? Will he remain in Darmstadt after the wedding or will he settle down here? God knows, we could do with another doctor."

"Well, this time our doctor has done very well, I'm told."

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“Certainly, it was a great opportunity for him. But, twenty-five per cent. of them died, that is, statistically speaking.”

“Well, well, that’s all right, Behrendt. Good-bye, I’m just going over to look at Burhenne’s fence——”

At ten o’clock all the pupils in the Gymnasium were supposed to congregate in the school hall. The hall smelt of wet-brushed hair, of sausage rolls, and of polished shoes, an all-pervading and indescribable smell of School and of fourteen-year-old boys. “Putex” made a speech, which was not so bad.

“... I do not entirely blame you for refusing to tell me who the culprit is. I myself have encouraged among you a loyalty towards each other and I always insist that you students at the Gymnasium must show unity and concord. But I am grieved, none the less ; I am grieved that you should condone such a flagrant act, as the destruction of a little fruit tree, by a silence, which implies approval. I am grieved. . . .” Head Master Burhenne was really grieved, for he was a fanatical cultivator of rare fruit trees, although in his cultivation of the young he was more interested in the normal and the average. His little quince tree was no more, and wrinkles of sorrow criss-crossed his Bismarckian face. . . . “As the culprit is not honourable enough to come forward and confess himself, the entire school must stay in after four o’clock this afternoon as a punishment. All the boys in each form must report in their respective classrooms, where they must stay until six o’clock. . . .”

From the back of the hall, near the harmonium, came the voice of the spokesman for the upper second form : “Might we ask the Head Master to postpone this punishment until to-morrow ? Our games are to-day.”

“Games ? I have forbidden all matches. I am informed that I must also again sharply remind the boys in the



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upper forms that smoking is forbidden ! Anyone who is not in his place this afternoon at four o'clock, will——”

Doctor Kreibisch suddenly intervened. He was twenty-seven years old, and taught gymnastics, English and geography. The progressive mayor had brought him to the Gymnasium from a modern Nature-School situated in a forest. The boys were fond of him. It was rumoured with amazement that he had allowed three of the boys in the top form to call him by his Christian name. Now this Doctor Kreibisch, standing under the coloured glass window of the hall, suddenly intervened : “ May I point out to the Head Master that this is the afternoon fixed for the games. The boys are having a sort of athletic exhibition ; exercises on the horizontal bar, hand-ball, hundred yards race. They have invited the champion boxer to attend, and they are, of course, very much excited. If I might intercede on their behalf——”

“ I regret that I cannot discuss the matter with you. This boxing champion—you see for yourself what this demoralisation of our youth is leading to. Line up in twos. March out.”

Otto and Paul, the two Profet boys, had red, fat ears. Kolk trod on the younger boy's foot, for he was a softy, a cry-baby, a tell-tale, and one could never be sure that he would hold his tongue. On the stairs, Gürzle, a top form boy, showed the Profet boy his gigantic, sweaty fist. A notice, printed in red paint, passed from hand to hand : it summoned a secret meeting shortly after one o'clock at the duck pond.

Franz Albert, the boxer, in the meantime, was having his luncheon at the Profets' villa ; they were perpetually eating there. “ I'm going to the dogs,” he said sadly, sitting in front of his plate, heaped with food, and oppressed by Frau Profet's look, which was so full of meaning.

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Franz Albert was the least independent human being in the world. Ever since his seventeenth year, he had been disciplined and cared for by his manager-trainer, Simotzky. Franz Albert was weighed, fed, forced to reduce or to increase his weight, trained for his fights, placed in the ring, kept out of the ring—all according to plan. Simotzky ran with him, ate with him and slept with him; Simotzky packed him up and shipped him off to Spain, to Holland or to America. Simotzky furnished him with the muscles which he needed; with the money which he earned; with sparring partners and railway tickets, and, at very rare intervals, with a girl. Simotzky knew what was good for him, when he should eat, drink, perspire, train or when he should play a game of whist to quieten his nerves. Simotzky was as good as a nursemaid and as strict as a slave driver with Franz Albert.

To this Simotzky, Franz Albert had written quite a decent letter, as follows :

“ To Herr Alexander Simotzky,  
Academy of Sport,  
Berlin,  
Kaiserallee 14 a.

“ DEAR ALEX,

“ Must inform you that we had bad luck with the car and that it overturned. But do not be frightened, dear Alex, for we were in luck, and, touch wood, I have remained unhurt. But the fright was a shock to my nerves and, for the present, I am too weak to keep up my training. But the doctor thinks that, in a few days, I shall be fit again. The others came off worse. Especially Lania. I hear she is in a dreadful state. I suppose her career is ended, her face has been patched up all over. I only had a little scratch on the nose. I

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sprained my left thumb, and the little cut on my ear began to bleed again. Otherwise, am well, am living with nice rich people in this little town, find it very comfortable. Only the food is too plentiful and too rich, and the lady urges me to eat, which politeness forbids me from refusing. Only fear, that all this food will harm my form, but don't worry, Franz will be all right. As soon as you've fixed the date for the fight with Kid Rowles, send me a wire at once. You can count on me. Have, however, resolved, that I'll never go away without you again.

"I remain, with kindest regards, your faithful  
"FRANZ."

As Franz Albert had not yet received orders from Simotzky as a result of this letter, he was still in Lohwinkel. He was well, but he did not know what to do, and he was quite incapable of making up his own mind to go to the Lohwinkel-Düsswald station and to have himself transported from there to Berlin.

"I'm going to the dogs completely here," he said this Wednesday. He went into the kitchen, and cut off a piece of the rope which was used to hang up the washing. Then he skipped round with the rope in a circle, three times, so lightly that you could not see his feet touching the ground. Frau Profet witnessed this spectacle with a soulful expression. The air round the boxer smelt so strongly of healthy sweat, that Frau Profet began to feel terribly embarrassed.

Herr Profet, in the meantime, was telephoning to his friend Kramsch in Schaffenburg: "... Yes, indeed, you can count on that. I'll take over the rest of the mortgages, 38,000 marks, plus the interest due since May. Yes, I'll take the risk. The vineyard has been in the von Raitzold family for two hundred years, you say? All



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right, then it will belong to my family for the next two hundred years——”

A Napoleonic move. Herr von Raitzold had been fearing it for more than four years. Until to-day, Herr Profet had lacked the courage to carry it through. Suddenly, something had snapped within him, and he had screwed up his courage. It was like a landslide. First, only the tops of the trees tremble slightly, then the roots are caught as well, then the whole ground begins to slide down violently. Lohwinkel was sliding ; Lohwinkel was now in motion.

Where was Müller with the car ? Müller was there, but without the car. The car was out of order, Müller said doggedly. Something was wrong with the gear-box ; a very complicated business ; they would have to wait for spare parts before the car could be repaired. Herr Profet was forced to walk to the factory. The walk took him twenty-four minutes, and many of the people, whom he passed, did not even bow to him.

The factory was in the same state as the car : it was not functioning. The workmen were there—at least, more than two-thirds of them were there. The electrical plant, however, was not working in the reaction chamber, and Shed No. 3 and also the storeroom were in complete darkness. A short circuit had occurred ; but, shrugging their shoulders, the men declared that so far they had not been able to discover what had caused it.

“ Well, we’ve always asked to have windows cut into this place, we’ve always asked for it——” Birkner reported, standing at attention.

Herr Profet, who felt the undisguised sneer and the rebelliousness of this remark, began his retreat. “ I shall consider you responsible for seeing that to-morrow everything is in good working order,” he said ; but it was a meaningless phrase, and he did not address it to Birkner,

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the sharp president of the works council, but to Hockling, the old, innocent and confused foreman of the works, who scratched the back of his trousers in consternation.

The weather was quite crazy on this particular Wednesday. It was as hot as in summer, although it was the middle of October, and very thin, blue-white, flat clouds were visible in the sky. The last blue chicory flowers at the side of the road looked tough and tired. The church clock struck twelve. The Wednesday market was over. No one knew why the price of eggs had increased by two pfennigs. Onion skins and leek leaves remained lying round the market place, until Herr Schmittbold appeared with his broom and whirled away everything into order amidst small clouds of dust. The old priest came out of the church, where Fräulein Ritting, the seamstress from the Wassergasse, had just confessed some trivial sin to him. She trespassed on his time a good deal, for this was the only pleasure of her empty old-maid's life. Old Frau Markus was carrying a live chicken, tied in a cloth, to Popp, the old jobbing tailor and Jewish butcher, who lived near the Upper Wall and killed chickens according to Jewish ritual by cutting their throats. The Mayor's wife, dressed in white, as though it were still summer, was walking up the Prieler Strasse towards the tennis courts ; she did this for the sake of her figure. Herr Profet, in a very excited state, was leaving the office of the District Savings Bank. He crossed the Square, warm in the midday sun, and disappeared in the doorway of the City Hall (built MDCXV, rebuilt MDCCCCVII). He asked to speak at once to the Mayor, Dr. Ohmann, on most urgent business.

"It's as though the whole town were standing on its head—ask him to come in——" Dr. Ohmann said to Haberlandt, his general factotum. Crowds had collected

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in front of the Widow Seelig's stationery shop, for in the window hung picture postcards of Leore Lania, looking sweet, enchantingly strange, with dark, lustrous eyes. The worthy clerks, on their way home to their mid-day dinner, stood thoughtfully in front of these pictures, strangely moved by the thought that this woman, this star, this person, was tangibly close. Persenthein's Rehle was shoving her way across the street, carrying a basket full of soup bones, and wearing her little blue overall—quite crazy.

“Have you heard that the doctor has operated on Lania? It's said that she offered him three thousand marks, if no scar remained——”

In the White Swan a bed had been freshly made and the floor of a room was being wax-polished for the reception of Herr Karbon. He had ordered the room by telephone for two o'clock. The landlady of the Swan was frightfully excited. She put down white knitted doilies wherever she could find an inch of space.

Four minutes past one. The boys come darting out of the Gymnasium to begin their secret meeting near the duck pond. Smiling sadly, the little Madonna on the choked-up fountain in the Square gives her Child the little apple made of stone. The second post office bus drives under the Gate; the Angermann House begins to tremble; Herr Lungaus is suffering from a headache; and, in the bedroom, Herr Karbon stands packing his battered suitcase, ready to leave the house.

Peter Karbon had awakened that Wednesday morning with a clear head. He had quite recovered from the accident. His shoulder was still slightly painful, but it was the sort of pain which Karbon liked; a reminder of difficulties and adventures successfully overcome. There were few periods in his life when he was quite free from



such reminders—just as boys usually have cut knees—and without this he found life very boring.

“Now, let’s see what will happen,” he said to himself, as he brushed his teeth.

His decision to move out of the Angermann House had been vaguely in his mind for some time. But it became fixed and determined shortly after nine o’clock in the morning when he passed the shed and found Frau Persenthein cleaning his boots.

She was crouched on the floor, with shafts of dim light falling across her face, which looked somewhat pale. She had pulled one of his big brown boots over her left hand; she was rubbing shoe cream on it, and polishing it with a concentrated and serious expression.

“What on earth are you doing?” he asked. His embarrassment made him sound gruff and unfriendly as he took the shoe away from her and got busy with it amidst a smell of turpentine. As a matter of fact this did not help matters much, for she immediately took up the next specimen in the long line of boots which were lined up in front of the shed, and began to scratch the mud from Nick Persenthein’s well-worn heels. She blushed a little as she did so.

“You see, the maid hasn’t come for two days—she lives in Obanger and she has been upset by the others—and I can’t make Lungaus wake up—and Rehle is helping me, as you see——” she said in her embarrassment and distress.

“I’m accustomed to cleaning my shoes myself; that is an English custom. No English lord would permit anyone else to clean his boots,” Peter declared boldly. He contracted his eyebrows sharply and set to work at once on the black ladies’ shoes which stood outside the row of boots. Elisabeth suddenly felt amazingly jubilant, and had one of her flashes of gaiety.

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“Everyone knows that story about the English lord,” she said. “But I did not know that these lords cleaned the ladies’ boots when they visited their castles.”

Peter whistled. As his hand crept down into the shoe, he experienced a curious feeling of tenderness. The shoe was long, it had taken on the peculiar slenderness of Elisabeth’s foot. The heel was flat and the front part of the shoe had been mended with waxed cobbler’s thread. Peter caressed this patch a little, with a hurried glance at Elisabeth. She saw his look—he had wanted her to see it—and she grew very serious. There was about half a yard of space between her shoulder and his, but this space was filled with a dangerously tense attraction. Rehle, squatting in the shed behind them, was dutifully scraping the mud from her own small boots which were always wet.

“I dreamed about you,” Karbon said.

Silence. The next pair of boots.

“Yes,” he added, as though she had asked him a question. “It was a wonderful dream——”

“Did her ladyship say anything?” he asked a moment later.

Elisabeth glanced up, and looked him straight in the face. It can’t go on this way, she thought. “You confuse me frightfully,” she said bravely.

“Do I really?” Karbon asked, and returned her look. He too became serious. “Do I confuse you?” he asked again slowly. He wanted badly to take her hand and lay it again on his heart, but both of them had boots on their hands.

“Mummy cried like anything,” Rehle remarked in the background.

Whereupon Karbon threw aside his boot-brush, and stroked Elisabeth’s knee very gently, three times. “Mummy must never cry again,” he said softly. Im-

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mediately after that he seemed to be in the greatest possible hurry. "I must telephone at once," he announced, and started to go towards the house.

"What is it—why must you?" Elisabeth asked distraught.

"Because I am well again. Don't you know that every healthy person in Berlin telephones for an hour every morning before he does anything else?"

She stood up too and shook out her apron. It was not the magic apron of yesterday, but the one with the lady-bird pattern. "The telephone is in the surgery. Will it disturb you if I—you see I must tidy up there——"

"Haven't you noticed it yet?" he asked, already following her into the room which was filled with the smell left by Doctor Persenthein's cigars, with unemptied ash trays, unwashed coffee cups and papers which were strewn all over the place.

"Noticed what, Herr Karbon?"

"That I should like to trot after you all the time like a little dog, Frau Doktor Persenthein. That——"

He stopped abruptly and began to tackle the telephone. Rehle helped him to turn the old-fashioned handle, and brought him the telephone directory: Mayence and District; Lohwinkel, see Dösswald-Lohwinkel.

"Can you manage by yourself, now? I have my work to do," Rehle said, not without dignity. For Rehle had her own duties to fulfil in the surgery. For instance, it was her task to empty the wastepaper-basket. Also she had to arrange the little pink, green, and blue glass bowls. ("Every up-to-date physician must use only Kliemann's coloured crystal"); then she had to bring in the post and file numerically the confused heap of periodicals, for she could already read numerals perfectly. Elisabeth moved up and down the room. The warm morning air drifted in through the open windows, and the church



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bells were ringing again, this time for the old lady who had died in 34 Prieler Street.

"Church bells—how Catholic that sounds," Karbon was saying into the telephone. He was speaking to Leore Lania out on the Estate. Elisabeth did not want to hear what he was saying, but she heard it all the same.

"How are you, Pretty?" and "Pretty must be sensible," and "This afternoon, I'll come and see poor, unhappy little Pretty."

Elisabeth again felt that burning and biting pain. This time she knew that it was jealousy. She felt a rift of clarity within herself as she stood in front of the steriliser fishing the sterilised clamps out of the boiling water with a pair of forceps. Karbon, in the meantime, had reserved a room in the White Swan. He had also talked briefly with Franz Albert, and had an urgent trunk call with a certain Herr Drögemann in his Berlin office. During the trunk call his face had changed to the strained mask which all men in the world wear when they are talking about their work. Karbon's talk with Drögemann swarmed with dates, conferences, cables to London, the Foreign Minister's speech, mutual guarantees, and also reproaches about the poor translation of the text of some advertisement—and what's happening to the Russian situation?—thank you, that will be all until tomorrow.

"Well, that's that," he said immediately afterwards, and his face relaxed. "Now I've straightened out my affairs a little, I can stay here as long as is necessary."

"When did you want to leave?"

"It does not depend only on me——" he answered significantly, looking with delight at the pink shadow which was rising on Elisabeth's neck. ("My God, here is a woman who can still blush," he thought—while she thought: "He must wait here for his actress.") Then,

without any further comment, he picked up the broom which she had left standing there and trotted after her into the hall, where the first patients had already congregated.

At ten o'clock Peter Karbon helped her to adjust the electric pump in the basement; at half-past ten he chopped wood in the kitchen; after that he occupied Lungaus' place on the coal-box, and helped Elisabeth to clean potatoes. Then he made sandwiches for Doctor Persenthein's lunch, while Elisabeth made tea and prepared spinach. Karbon was having a marvellous time. It was ridiculous and idiotic that he should want so much to be near this woman, but the fact remained, and he had resolved, for the present, not to leave her even for a moment. As far as Frau Doktor Persenthein was concerned, it was quite certain that never in her whole life had she ever been as happy as she was that morning. It was an exultant yet painful happiness, transparent, shimmering, hovering over depths of fear and the knowledge that soon they must part. It was the way in which love always begins, like a golden mist before sunrise, like the dew on fruit before it is plucked, like a heart in the bud.

Meanwhile the doctor made an appearance in the kitchen, and flitted about like a ghost, his eyes tired from want of sleep, a depressing spectacle. And he was in a bad mood, worried and full of complaints.

"Why aren't the spatulas ready? Where are the spatulas? There are none in the cupboard. Really, it's the least one can ask that they should be laid out ready for the surgery hours. If I can't even have spatulas——"

Elisabeth rushed into the surgery. The spatulas were in the cupboard after all, only Rehle had put them on the right-hand shelf instead of the left.

"Here they are, here are your spatulas, Nick. Don't be angry, Nick." But Nick was only a heavy, unkind shadow among his sweating patients.

1 Shortly before noon in the living-room a strange conversation took place between Elisabeth and Peter Karbon.

"If you could have three wishes, Elisabeth, and each one could be fulfilled, what would you wish?"

"I'd wish for eight hundred and twenty marks," she said without thinking. It was the sum which she had added up hundreds of times in her little household account book: her debts to Markus, the outstanding bills for coal, meat and butter, three instalments for the Pantostat and for an apparatus for the transfusion of blood, boots for Rehle, four sheets, twelve glass dishes, money for the piano tuner, a winter coat. Eight hundred and twenty marks.

Peter's hands twitched slightly, as though he must at once save someone from drowning, but then he put them down again in front of him on the table—

"I can't be so incredibly tactless as to write out a cheque to her now," he thought. "There is nothing I can say in answer to that wish. My God, and there she sits full of anxiety——"

"That's not a real wish," he said finally. "I owe your husband at least four times that sum. Go on with the next. Three real wishes."

Elisabeth looked at him attentively. It took her some time to comprehend his answer and to realise the extent of the sum which he had indicated. Worries are the most stubborn habits in the world. Even after a poor man has won a huge lottery prize, he will still for months wake up in the night with a start, worrying about food and rent. Elisabeth could not imagine a state of affairs in which she would have enough money, and, deep down within her, this relief about the money was mixed with a strange and devilish little tinge of bitterness. Herr Karbon is a wealthy man. He can pay for what he gets



*Dear Mrs. W. J. G.*

and go on his way. We must stay here in Lohwinkel. What do we really mean to Herr Karbon?

"Go on. Three real wishes," Peter urged. This time she thought for a long time. Absurd things kept running through her mind, driving her thoughts away from the main issue. She thought again about the sheets, a new sewing machine, a wireless set, about having the stove in the bathroom thoroughly repaired—but she drove her thoughts through these things down to the main issue.

"I'd like to be as I used to be——" she said finally, and, as she spoke, her shoulders, which were tired again, sank forward a little.

"How used you to be?" Peter asked, smiling. She, too, began to smile.

"I don't quite know. Jolly. Well—a bit silly and frivolous perhaps, but very jolly. I grew up as the only girl among a lot of boys, my father wanted me to go to the university. Well, I wasn't made for that. But I always joined the boys in all their larks. If they'd told me to climb the church steeple, I'd have done it. Then I went to Munich for six months. If only I could ever again be like I was when I was in Munich——"

"Yes? And when did you change?"

"When I married, of course," she said quickly. She regretted the words as soon as she had spoken. "I'm very happily married," she added with a stubborn expression on her face. Then she looked down at her hands. Peter Karbon, too, looked at the upturned palms of her hands. Two days before she had set to work at her fingers with cold cream and nail polish. But, despite this fact, it seemed to them both, during the next ten seconds, as they looked down at her work-worn and very long hands, that all the toil and disappointment of her life were visible in their rough skin.

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“Spinach,” thought Peter furiously. “Shoe-polish! Coal dust! What a damned shame!”

“All right. What’s your second wish?”

“My second wish? . . . I always thought I’d like to go to Naples——”

“Good Lord! Why on earth just Naples?”

“Isn’t Naples beautiful?”

“Of course it is. But it’s not really a journey to Naples; it’s too near. I’ll tell you something, Elisabeth: the whole world is beautiful. Honestly, I’ve not seen a square foot of earth anywhere that I’ve not enjoyed. But traveling, you know, is something quite different. It’s restlessness, do you understand, it’s being pulled away, it’s the sensation of motion. You wake up at night and feel the wheels and axle of the train, you’re on the Trans-Siberian Railway. hallo, two days from Omsk to Irkutsk—or you’re on the Pacific Coast, on board ship, and at about three o’clock in the morning you get up and walk up to the stern, there’s a rushing sound round the bows, and you can feel the screw in motion, and you know that she’s moving forward all the time, and you’ve left the spot where you were, and, sometimes, you feel this motion so strongly that you’d like to shout for joy. So why just Naples?”

“Oh—I don’t know. At home we had a picture of Naples that I always looked at as a child before I went to sleep. Perhaps that’s why.”

“You mustn’t be so modest in your wishes. Naples, indeed! Wish for some place—let’s say India.”

“All right. India,” she said, smiling at him as though he were a small child.

“There are some surprises in store for you,” Karbon was thinking.

Elisabeth looked at him, this strange man with his red hair. It was as though he had torn open all the windows

in the Angermann House, and let in fresh air. Foreign countries, the world, adventures. No one in Lohwinkel looked like him; Elisabeth was always filled with surprise whenever she looked at him suddenly, that such improbable people as he should actually exist. "And the third wish?" he said.

"Have I another?" she said, as seriously as though this Peter Karbon were really a magician in a fairy story, who carried miracles and fulfilment of wishes about in his pocket. "It's all nonsense," she added immediately and got up. "I must get back to the kitchen—the vegetables——" As she spoke her eyes were directly in front of his mouth. She saw the curve of his lips as distinctly as though she had been looking at them through a microscope, and she felt a thin stab of pain at her heart.

"You're the first woman I've met who is just the right height for me," he said, and this remark opened up before her a vista of a long procession of women. "We shall dance marvellously together. Do you like dancing?"

"Passionately."

"Do you ever dance?"

"Never."

The fact that he had said "we"—"we shall"—had again sent the blood to the nape of her neck. There was something like a promise or a threat in his use of the word, something urgent. She turned to flight.

"Stop," Karbon called after her. "Your third wish?" She was standing at the door of Rehle's little room, where a peaceful teddy-bear was lunching with two dolls who were both seriously ill. Rehle was drawing numerals in an old household account book.

"Don't disturb me, I must add up my accounts," Rehle said in the strained voice she had heard her mother use hundreds of times. Peter caught hold of Elisabeth's elbows. Her throbbing flesh was smooth and cool.



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"Well?" he asked.

"The third wish—that's not so simple. I wish that everything were different," she said.

"What do you wish were different?"

"Well, everything."

"Different in what way?"

"Quite different. I don't know exactly how, but different."

"All right," Peter Karbon said, as though he had received an explicit order. He let her go, and she disappeared at once into the darkness of the steep back stairs.

"Already everything has changed," she thought, disturbed to her very depths. Karbon was calling out something after her.

"I'm going to pack my things," he called. He was standing at the top of the stairs, and a shaft of light fell on his head and shoulders. "I'm moving out. I don't want to go on living in your house any more."

"Why on earth not?" Elisabeth asked, standing stock-still on the fourth step.

"Because—I can't shout my reason down to you now. I'll explain it all to you this afternoon. We'll go for a walk together."

"I've no time for that."

"Yes, you have," Peter said simply and disappeared. In the kitchen Elisabeth found that the spinach was overcooked and that the fire had almost gone out. She plunged into her work as though it were a salvation for her tottering soul. She would have liked to go and spend ten minutes in the church, but she had no time to do so. Between her various jobs in the kitchen, she ironed a few pieces of washing, and then the doctor came and fetched her. The hall was still crowded with patients, though it was almost noon, and the murmurous unrest in Lohwinkel was surging against even the Angermann House.

In the consulting-room there was a rebellious and terribly frightened child who had to have a whitlow cut. Elisabeth took up the small struggling mite, put him on her lap and held his arms firmly.

"Higher," the doctor commanded. "Nearer the light. Why, you're twitching yourself. If you can't hold him still——"

Elisabeth pulled herself together, as she inhaled the smell of his white overall: iodine and many cheap cigarettes. Pus streamed out of the opened abscess, she felt dizzy and a little sick. It frightened her to realise how repulsive Nick's hospital smell suddenly seemed to her. Afterwards the child began to sob uncontrolledly, and laid its damp face against her neck.

"Take it out," said the doctor. "Next patient."

The strange little arms round her shoulders gave Elisabeth a little comfort. Rehle never cried, never put her arms round one's neck, never needed comforting. She kept her sturdy little heart tightly locked away, as though in a smooth mussel-shell. What on earth is the matter with me? she wondered, as she handed the child back to its father. Everything is all right, everything is as it should be.

"Here is some washing which belongs to you," she said, quarter of an hour later, coming into the bedroom where Karbon was packing his bag. "But why are you leaving so suddenly? Here at our house—we at least have a bathroom, and you won't find another in Lohwinkel."

Her argument was pitiable. It bore no relation to the imploring look in her eyes—of which she herself, by the way, was quite unconscious. Karbon stopped packing at once and walked over the crooked floor to where she stood. In daylight this bedroom was simply hideous. The beds, an heirloom from her late Uncle Burhenne, the

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dark depressing beamed ceiling, the washstand with the tidy against the wall and the imitation marble oil-cloth cover—all this made one hold one's breath.

"You know yourself why I am leaving. Don't you think it's best?"

Elisabeth said "No," but she thought "Yes."

"Don't let's humbug each other about it," Karbon said quickly. "In the first place, I don't like to have you waiting on me, I don't like it at all. I won't be a witness of this drudgery any longer, I simply won't. And then our relationship is now such that I don't want to go on living in your husband's house. I have a great respect for your husband——" he added with a small chivalrous bow. These sentences hissed by Elisabeth like swords. Her heart stood still.

"Our relationship—why, that's nonsense," she stammered weakly.

Karbon stood facing the door, his back towards her. "It's difficult to express these things, Elisabeth," he said. "Nowadays, we seem to lack the necessary words. I can't come up to you here and say 'I love you,' and 'do you love me?' But we both know what has happened to us. You know that I will not leave you here. I know that you will come with me. So what else is there to say?"

"That's not true—that's not true," Elisabeth whispered. "That's not true."

Earthquake. Landslide. Explosion. Karbon came quickly from the door to where she stood by the bed. He wished violently to kiss her, to kiss her in a way that would renew her, to bring her out of her shell and change her into her real self. Since the moment when he had looked at her consciously for the first time, when her hand had lain against his heart, she had seemed to him to be disguised, a princess in a Cinderella apron. These thoughts had no words or shape in his mind; but he



took her in his arms, her beseeching mouth under his mouth, and a rocket of emotion shot steeply up towards the sky. To her it was as though all her life she had been waiting only for this, to sink down and down, with him above her entering into her very heart, as in a dream.

" . . . It's all so true—so true. . . ." he said breathless, as he released her from the kiss. She walked over to the window with unseeing eyes. Peter Karbon, behind her in the room, stretched up his chin, patted his ribs, and breathed in air deeply. He felt as though his immediate future were floating before him in the air as colourful and light as a bunch of toy balloons. He carefully put his shoes in their silk bags, took up his folding clothes-hangers and went on with his packing.

"And what are we going to do about it, Elisabeth?" he asked the woman by the window.

"Do about it? Nothing at all. You'll go away—and I shall stay here."

"I shan't do anything of the sort," said Peter, moving towards her again with his burning, vibrating presence.

Just as his head was touching her shoulder, there was a knock at the door. Lungaus appeared; Lungaus, still feeling the effects of the evening before, with a bad conscience, but as sullen and as unwashed as ever, and wearing Nick's ghostlike trousers.

"I didn't want to disturb you, mother," he said tactfully. "I only wanted to ask about my lunch."

"Your coffee is by the oven in the kitchen," Elisabeth said, without looking at him.

"Coffee isn't included in my diet. It's poison for me."

"Then wait until noon. I've not prepared anything for you, Lungaus."

Lungaus stiffened with surprise in the doorway. "But I must have something to eat," he said dolefully. "I don't feel very fit as it is."

Elisabeth tried to compose her hands or her lips or her voice, but everything about her was still trembling.

"There is some sausage in the larder. Make yourself a sandwich," she said with an effort.

"Sausage? For me? Sausage?" screamed Lungaus, and shuffled into the room in frightened surprise. Suddenly Elisabeth felt sick of him. She was sick of everything, sick of her three years of care for Lungaus and of her martyrdom for the Idea.

She turned round sharply. "If you're well enough to get drunk like a pig, you're well enough to eat sausage," she cried. Her lips and her nails were pale. Even the pupils of her eyes had grown bright with excitement. Karbon began to laugh above his open bag. Lungaus nodded his head significantly.

"Well, all I want to say is, what will the doctor say about it all and about the sausage?" he remarked.

"The doctor need not know about it," Elisabeth said, turning again towards the window. Lungaus looked at her, looked at Herr Karbon, and then looked at her again.

"I see, mother. The doctor need not know about it? I see. Well, as for me, I'll say nothing," he added, and left the room.

A little mortar trickled down as he shut the door. Saint George, that stiff wooden statue with the large head, plunged his lance into the dolphinlike snout of the helpless dragon. Anarchy had begun in the Angermann House.

When Leore Lania had started on her holiday, she had planned, among other things, to try and break herself of the habit of taking sleeping draughts. But now, as she lay in pain in the damp, chilly guest-room at the Estate, her head buzzing with worries like blue-bottles, this was out of the question. She sent a few messages out into the


world ; she wrote to a few people, who were devoted to her ; but her faith in human fellowship was too small for her to expect much help from that.

“ Doctor Marta Stein, Neubabelsberg,” she telegraphed, for example. “ Don’t be frightened, darling, I’m still alive stop send newspaper cuttings about accident care von Raitzold stop kisses from poor Lolein.”

And then on Tuesday came a few newspapers, which reported that her face had been terribly mutilated. In the meantime she rushed off a letter to Herr Erich von Mollzahn, Kiel-Holtenau, Hydroplane Station :

“ MY DEAR,—I am lying in a tiny little canopy-bed praying to God that my letter will reach you and that you and your ‘ bird ’ are not reposing on the deck of some ship—heaven knows where—and that you have not been shot down by some catapult into some ocean where no cry for help from your Bibi will ever reach you. Naturally, I’m in trouble, or I should not be writing to you. You know that you’re the only person in the world when things go badly. Did you read about it in the paper ? They’ll make noise enough with their exaggerated reports about the accident. Now listen to me : you must get me a doctor, the best man for facial surgery you can dig up anywhere. I have fallen into the clutches of a man here, in whom I have not the slightest confidence. He has enormous hands, which hurt very much, and he ruins everything he touches. The people with whom I am staying don’t think much of him either, he’s just operated one of their farmhands to death. Well, Bibi is still alive, but you know Bibi well enough to know that she’ll go on living only as long as it suits her and that she certainly won’t go on living with a messed-up face. Oh, Erich dear, if you could be here only for an hour, you’re so broad






and so sensible and your hands are so warm. Karbon, with whom I came on this damned trip, is nice enough, but he was injured himself and you can't imagine how selfish an accident of this kind makes everyone. One suddenly realises that one's been travelling round the world with a pack of strangers. Bibi is in the dumps, I tell you. Bibi is fed through a little glass tube and half her face is pasted together with something which this terror of a doctor calls a 'little garland.' Bibi doesn't like this sort of thing at all. The people here are about a thousand years behind the times, they live on a melancholy old Estate, which is about to go smash. 'The Fall of the House of Usher,' do you remember? Under my window are puddles, clouds and departing swallows. The curtains on my bed are musty and queer. The room is cold. They heat it with damp pine-wood, and moan because their forest is being cut down and because they've had to mortgage some vineyard or other. In four days' time, the doctor plans to take out the stitches and then we'll see what will happen. It's funny to think that here, in this Lohwinkel, I may have to use the old revolver you gave me to learn target-shooting. I shouldn't like to be buried here. Take care of me, send me a doctor who knows his job and will tell me the truth. Come and take me away from here, my friend, my dear, dear friend. I've finally got my divorce from Pertöffy, did you know that? But it wasn't as easy to get a divorce there as in our country, and he's angry with me."

She calculated when this letter would leave, when it would be received, when she could expect help to arrive; and it seemed an eternity. True, she fought bravely through the hours, turned on the light and switched it off again, read volumes of magazines published in the

Nineties, with yellow pages and smelling of tobacco ; she listened to the dog, the tree-tops, the rain and the wind. She listened to the night and to the monotonous, thick, flute-like notes of an unknown bird in the darkness. Finally she gave in, and took a veronal tablet at three o'clock in the morning, and a second one at half-past three. Then she counted a thousand sheep jumping over a hurdle, grew drowsy and dozed off. She fell asleep just as the Estate was awakening for the day.

Two cocks began to crow ; one of them could crow, the other was just learning. Then the stable door was opened, a lantern shuffled across the courtyard, a pail knocked against the stone rim of the well. The wind changed, and swept in at the window, damply laden with the smell of straw and dung. Inside the house, Herr von Raitzold coughed ; the wild grape-vines on the wall trembled gently before sunrise ; someone chained up the dog, talking to him soothingly. On the horizon a thin green strip of light was already visible, but Fräulein von Raitzold took the lantern with her when she went to cut the last flowers in the flower beds and pack them into the flat wicker baskets to send away.


This good lady was fighting a losing battle, and she knew it. The Estate was in debt, mortgaged to the hilt, and burdened with liabilities to the very limit. For years it had been a case of filling one gap, only to have another torn open. They had begun desperate experiments, all of which had failed. They had raised pigs, only to see the price of pigs fall ; they had tried American wheat seed (" five-times the average yield, as recommended by the Agricultural Experimental Station "), but their soil would not grow it. For two years the vintage had been bad ; and this year, when it looked like being excellent, Herr von Raitzold had been forced to sell the grapes on the vines. When he thought of this, Herr von Raitzold be-



came extremely depressed. They had no manure for the autumn planting ; their own cattle were not enough to supply it for such a large estate, and artificial fertilisers were beyond their means. They had not been able to pay their insurance premium. Twice they had been granted a respite for their taxes, and now they were threatened with distraint. The potato harvest was still in progress ; with a supreme effort they had been able to pay off the labourers last Saturday. This week, pay day was approaching in abject hopelessness. Panic had seized upon Herr von Raitzold, and he was harassed on every side. The Sonnentreppchen was at stake, the best vineyard in the whole district, the very centre and heart of the Raitzolds' Estate. Herr von Raitzold had quite lost all his bearings with regard to his financial position. He pored over his books and reckoned up interest, and interest on the interest, a supercharge of eight per cent., because his declaration of taxes had been late, interest on mortgages, the high rate of which was veiled by the word " commission." He added and added up these sums all wrongly. He could not understand them ; but he did not dare to let anyone else look at his papers, and so he lost himself in a labyrinth of yellow, green and red files. His sister, meanwhile, was sending flowers to Schaffenburg, thirty litres of milk to Dösswald, and eighty-five eggs to the weekly market at Lohwinkel. Her brother's debts totalled about 250,000 marks. Her weekly receipts were 54 marks. Standing there in her high riding-boots, straight and thin, there was nothing for her to do but to smile in a melancholy way.

On this Wednesday, which was steamingly and depressingly hot soon after sunrise, more like August than October, the flowers seemed to be over for the season. People had asters and gladioli in their own gardens, so it was not worth while sending these away. Not more





than twenty or twenty-five roses were still in bloom, a yellow variety with their curling petals showing a tinge of red. The Fräulein took one of the roses in the palm of her hand and looked down at it, it was as though she had raised a child's tired head to look into its face. She considered for a moment whether one might not raise the price of these late roses, but then she said to herself: "No, I shall give them all to her. All of them." She took the rose scissors from her basket and cut the flowers. Her movements were somewhat restless and abrupt; they were different from her usual restrained manner. "She is still asleep," she continued to herself as she passed the wine cellar, and inhaled its sour fermenting fumes as though it were something which could relieve her. She let her left hand hang down on the cool dewy dampness of the rose leaves. She had the habit of talking to herself half-aloud, like many people who are excessively lonely.

As Fräulein von Raitzold carefully entered the room and shook out the flowers, damp and loose as they were, Leore Lania was lying in bed with her eyes closed. But she was not asleep, in spite of the veronal; she was only pretending to be asleep. She had pressed the uninjured side of her face against her elbow; the other side, which still burned and twitched slightly, was exposed. The wound was closed with a narrow strip of gauze. The corner of Lania's mouth was drawn down as though in pain and the sight of it moved Fräulein von Raitzold poignantly. She stood there for a while looking at the actress. Lania felt this look, but continued to act being asleep and tried to keep her eyelids motionless, as she did when a film was being shot. Fräulein von Raitzold finally crept away from the bed, and as soon as her back was turned Leore opened her eyes a little and watched her. The good lady had taken off her top boots, probably

because of this morning call, and she wandered in her brown-stockinged feet as far as the door. At the door she stopped and turned round again. She raised both her hands with a curiously passionate gesture and held them in front of her mouth, whispering to herself: "My God, my God——" It sounded like an urgent call for help. Lania suppressed a somewhat amused feeling within herself. Fräulein von Raitzold in the meanwhile had centred her attention on a warm black pyjama suit which Lania was wearing during her convalescence. Fräulein von Raitzold was staring at this small heap of silky shimmering wool with an absent look. The pyjama suit was lying on the floor, for Lania was not accustomed to putting anything in its right place by herself. Fräulein von Raitzold picked it up, stood still a moment and then pressed her forehead against the black material in her hands. As she did so a strangely furtive expression of determination crossed her face. Lania decided to wake up. She was inwardly amused and she awakened with small preparatory moans so that Fräulein von Raitzold had time to let the suit drop back again to the floor.

"Good morning," Leore said, immediately turning the uninjured side of her face towards the light. Since the moment when she had been hurt she had been training herself to hide the injured side of her face.

"Good morning, did you sleep well?"

"Thank you, I slept beautifully."

"Without a sleeping draught?"

"Yes, without a sleeping draught," Lania said. A swarm of such silly little lies, which were quite useless, always seemed to buzz about her. It was as though her real fragile self, which was in danger, was hiding behind a close, thick protective hedge. The Fräulein remained standing at the other side of the room looking over at the

actress as though she were looking from one island to another.

“What lovely flowers! Are they for me?”

“They are no longer lovely enough to be sold——”  
Fräulein von Raitzold responded ungraciously, “would you like your bath?”

“Yes, if it’s not too much trouble——”

It was indeed a trouble, for on this decaying Estate everything was a trouble. The bells did not function, the chimneys were in need of repair and were apt to catch fire, the electric generator for the pump had been abandoned, because its upkeep was too expensive, and the old well in the courtyard was now used instead.

Fräulein von Raitzold, however, still in her stockinged feet, left the room at once. Outside the door she put on her boots and began to be so active in the kitchen that half an hour later Lania’s tub of hot water and her breakfast were brought to her. Fräulein von Raitzold herself set the table on the little terrace. She put honey and butter on the table. The butter which was sprinkled with drops of water had been moulded into shape with the old wooden pat, and the mark of the Estate with the Raitzolds’ coat of arms had been pressed into its creamy whiteness.

“How lovely,” Leore said, rubbing her nose against a red grape-vine which hung from the wall of the house. “Everything here reminds me of my childhood. My grandfather had an estate, too. He was a retired general, an amusing old gentleman.”

Not a word of this was true. Lania was merely acting a little play of her own: Morning on an Estate. Down in the courtyard a cat, carrying her kittens in her mouth, was also acting her part. Fräulein von Raitzold, who had smiled a little, suddenly withdrew her hands from the



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table. She did not like her hands at all. Anyway, she had such a miserable feeling about her own ugliness and inferiority. She put her hands, with the nails full of soil from the garden, into her jacket pocket quickly. Then she said: "Well," and prepared to leave.

"Why don't you stay here with me for a little while!" Lania exclaimed, snatching one of her arms and resting her temple against it with a gesture of entreaty. Her little caresses had become famous as far away as America——

"Sorry——no time——" Fräulein von Raitzold murmured, embarrassed. But she allowed herself to be held back for another moment.

"I know. I'm so in your way. You'll be glad when you've got rid of me."

"No, no! Not—at all. On the contrary——" the other said, frightened. "No," she said, sitting down after all on the railing of the terrace like an Amazon. "You are—I think it is a blessing to have you here. I do not know how we'd have got through this week without your visit. My brother, too——"

"I heard him coughing and walking about all night."

Then you didn't sleep, after all, the Fräulein thought, feeling a strange joy because she had caught Lania telling a lie. "My brother would have collapsed if you hadn't been here. As it is, he is pulling himself together. He controls himself because you are here. Thank God!"

"You consider self-control very important?"

"Oh, yes," Fräulein von Raitzold said, breathing deeply. "Yes, of course, how could one live without self-control——?"

Leore Lania was letting strings of honey drip from her spoon so that the sun would shine through them. "You are so good to me," she said, suddenly holding out her other hand to her with a spontaneous gesture. But Fräulein von Raitzold was busy trying to light a

small pipe. Lania closed her eyes slightly; she was eternally curious about people and she felt a constant desire to experiment with them. How singular and unique they all were, behind their neatly-polished façades——

“I have often noticed that masculine women are particularly good sorts,” she said without looking at Fräulein von Raitzold. The latter went on puffing at her pipe, glanced over swiftly at Lania, and said nothing.

“I like that type of woman very much,” Lania continued the conversation in the form of an incidental monologue. “The friend with whom I share a flat is very much like you. She’s an architect. A strange human being. Before I met her, she lived for three years with a beautiful young woman, a painter. When my friend left her, this young woman shot herself. Bang, right in her face, it must have been a terrible business. Since then my friend is a bit odd. One sometimes thinks that real passion, what one used to call the ‘passion of a lifetime,’ only happens nowadays in affairs that are outside the conventions.”

Lania ate her bread and honey. Fräulein von Raitzold looked down into the courtyard as she listened. What she heard stirred the dust, like feathers, but it had no real weight at all. . . .

“I’ve heard that such things exist,” she finally ventured. She tried to speak lightly herself, but her voice dragged after her like chains.

“Exist—well, I should say they do exist. I could tell you lots about those things, for, you know, I am successful with women. They jump at me—and I tell you one can experience a great deal in these things. I like it quite well, by the way. I also like to go to their clubs occasionally—only I’m not going in heavily for this new fashion.”

Clubs—Fräulein von Raitzold thought. Fashion, she

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thought. There sat Lania, this little bird-like creature, twittering away a destiny—the incredibly lonely and deeply-buried destiny of those who were “different.”

“You say ‘a masculine woman,’” Fräulein von Raitzold said after a moment, with a dry little smile. “That sounds so nice and simple. Here, in our part of the world, they say: ‘Screw loose!’ ‘Crazy old maid!’ Are you in pain?” she continued quickly, for Leore had pushed aside her breakfast with a resigned gesture and her face was twitching slightly near the wound under the strip of gauze.

“Oh, no,” Leore said stubbornly. Her eyelids seemed slightly swollen and she touched them gently with the tips of her fingers. It was a gesture typical of people who take too many sleeping-draughts, and who have a bad conscience about it.

“I was once engaged,” Fräulein von Raitzold said, and then she waited. Leore waited too. She had a special technique of looking away from people who had a confession to make. “I was engaged,” Fräulein von Raitzold said more softly. “To a young man who lived near here. His father, at the time, owned the largest vineyards in Rhenish Hesse. Nothing came of it. I had—I could not make up my mind to marry. It was a sort of fear. It was as though I was frightened—I couldn’t do it. Well. So one just works about, getting to be an old plough-horse. Yes.”

A pause.

Fräulein von Raitzold delved in her own mind for a little while longer. “When I was seventeen a peasant girl boxed my ears; at the time I didn’t know what it was all about. I didn’t know until much later,” she was thinking. She thought she would say it aloud, but then she just could not do it, though to speak about things made them more bearable—she realised for the first time.



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"When one is older one understands many things," was all she said. Then Lania's caressing cheek moved towards her hand, which was now hanging down relaxed, and pressed close to it. Fräulein von Raitzold took hold of Leore's hair as though it had been some dog's fur; she was only accustomed to feel the warmth in animals. "People go about taking their share of life or happiness, or whatever you want to call it, so for granted," Fräulein von Raitzold said. "Even the boy who looks after the cows has his share some time or other. And I——? I think I've come off rather badly," she added, getting up to leave the terrace. With a quick motion Lania turned her face in the Fräulein's hand and pressed a kiss into the palm. The strip of gauze gently chafed the skin, which smelt of tobacco and the soil. Fräulein von Raitzold remained standing for a moment as though she were listening to some distant music. "Clubs—you say that there are clubs. Then the women who belong to these clubs are happy?" she asked.

Lania shrugged her shoulders.

"I never thought about it much. It's not a problem for me."

"Perhaps it isn't a problem—there—where you live. Here it is a problem," Fräulein von Raitzold said. She stood still for a moment and then she blushed deeply; the flush which spread under her brown weatherbeaten skin looked strange enough. "Forgive this outburst," she added before she retired quickly. Lania smiled after her. She felt a throbbing and burning pain in her taut wound.

Shortly after ten o'clock, Doctor Persenthein's motorcycle, its exhaust open, dashed into the courtyard of the Estate. The doctor, who was in a great hurry, had not yet discarded the expression of condolence which he had

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assumed at 34 Prieler Street. He had come to take the stitches out of the wound, and, for an hour before, Lania had been summoning all her energy to face this unpleasant moment.

Lania hated the doctor, because she felt that she was at his mercy ; and he was not pleased with her, because a small place in the wound had begun to fester and he was afraid that it might not heal successfully. Whenever his fingers touched the actress's face, his hands seemed to him to become heavy, awkward and spoiled by the drudgery of his country practice. She, for her part, submitted to this doctor's fingers, which smelt so strongly of iodine, as though to an execution.

"Did I hurt you?" the doctor asked when it was over.

"A bit," she said, merely to annoy him. She had felt nothing at all. The doctor was looking at her with the intent and objective gaze with which a craftsman looks at his handiwork ; the way a carpenter looks at a table, or a shoemaker at a shoe. "It's not so bad after all," he concluded ; "do you want to look at it?"

"No," Lania said vehemently. Normally she could act to herself for three hours at a time in front of a triple mirror, but now she felt an uncanny, sub-conscious fear of all mirrors. She investigated the rim of her lips with the tip of her tongue, discovered a rough bit of scab and retired quietly to a dark corner of the room. Persenthein said good-bye sulkily and continued his rounds. He missed not having Rehle on the pillion-seat behind him ; he was depressed because the child had seemed withdrawn from him during the last few days. "This topsy-turvy state of affairs has got to stop," he promised himself. Two of his patients had suffered relapses, despite the fact that their predisposition had been readjusted, not to mention Lungaus' excesses.

“ You are nervy, Nick,” Elisabeth had said gently.

Yes, he was nervy. He rode along the Dösswald Road, and his head felt as though swarms of flies were buzzing round it.

Lania's next caller was Herr von Raitzold. He called upon her every morning, most dutifully, whether it suited her or no. For these visits he arrayed himself in garments of a pristine elegance and talked in the way he had talked as an officer years and years before. He had a vague recollection as to how actresses should be treated and what sort of anecdotes were pleasing to their ears. Lania listened to him, grateful for the complimentary remarks he made about her appearance and for the fact that he did not seem to be shocked by the wound over her mouth. She regarded him with raised eyebrows, as she would have looked at some stage “ super ” walking-on as a nobleman, whose make-up and acting were exaggerated. In this conversation there were always little breaks of silence, pauses during which Herr von Raitzold collapsed into a bundle of frightened cares. He had large hands, with tobacco-stained fingers and swollen blue veins. Now and then he pulled up the skin on the back of his hand to see how elastic it was. It was not elastic. The small ridge of skin remained upraised for a few seconds before it slowly, as though against its own will, became smooth again.

Herr von Raitzold sighed. He uttered a few threats against Herr Profet, that vulgarian, that fellow without any feeling of responsibility, who had come from God knows where, and who tyrannised over the district. Lania applauded his agitated speech.

“ You must do something to prevent this, Herr von Raitzold,” she said firmly. Her remark encouraged the landowner ; it encouraged him more than she knew. A dull determination gradually formed within him. He



stared at Leore's legs in her pyjamas, he considered this little creature highly improper and bohemian in her ways, but for this very reason she evoked all that he possessed of virility and pugnacity.

"Well, we shall see—a gentleman remains a gentleman and a profiteer remains a profiteer," he muttered ominously.

"Where is the master?" someone shouted down in the courtyard. "Where is the master? He's wanted downstairs, someone's telephoning from Schaffenburg."

The landowner's blood throbbed in his forehead. He rushed down the stairs, his hands racing over the well-worn banisters. The hall smelt of tar, for the defective roof had been repaired with tarred pasteboard, because it was cheap, and some of these pieces lay in front of the windows, melting in the heat of the sun.

"What?" Herr von Raitzold shouted into the telephone. "The Agricultural Bank? What? *What!* What do you say? I don't understand!" His blood pressure was not in order, and he felt a buzzing in his ears. "Why, that's impossible!" he shouted into the telephone. "That's quite impossible. That is absolutely impossible—it's out of all reason," he added softly to himself when the talking had ceased from the other end of the line. He sat down in an arm-chair, for his knees were shaky, and, for a time, he remained seated there.

A little later the telephone rang again. Herr von Raitzold stared into the receiver as though into the mouth of a pistol before he answered. This time it was Peter Karbon, who wanted to speak to Frau Lania. She came to the telephone even before they sent for her.

"At last, at last, at last, at last," throbbed the blood in her throat, as she hurried down the flat, worn-out stairs.

"Don't let me disturb you," Herr von Raitzold said

gallantly. The only telephone in the house was here in the hall, which was really his study with its writing-desk and gun cupboard.

"You don't disturb me in the least," Lania answered. And it was true that Herr von Raitzold heard her saying only the most matter-of-fact things in the most matter-of-fact tones, as she spoke to Karbon.

"How are you, Pretty?"

"Thanks. All right—and how are you?"

"All right. Have the stitches been taken out? Was it very painful?"

"Not worth mentioning."

"And how does your face look now? Are you satisfied?" . . .

"If her face was ruined by her driving in my car, I'll have to marry her presently . . ." Karbon was thinking over in Lohwinkel, in Doctor Persenthein's surgery, where Elisabeth was dusting.

Leore Lania, in the hall of the Estate, breathed deeply for a moment in order to steady her voice, and to make herself laugh as she felt she must do.

"Thanks. My face looks something like a pancake that's been stepped on by a cab horse. But it's better than it was the day before yesterday."

"Well, if you're well enough to joke about it——"

"I'm still good-looking enough to become a lavatory attendant at the Zoo Station."

"My poor, unhappy Pretty. I'll be one of your regular customers if you get the job. May I come and see you this afternoon?"

"No. Certainly not."

"Don't be silly, little one. You mustn't be quite so vain. I must see you——"

"But I'm such a terrible sight——"

"You always were. That won't bother me. I'll come

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to the Estate this afternoon. You can't throw me over as completely as all that, Pretty."

"All right, then, if you will have it," Lania said in a dry, determined voice. An Empire mirror hung on the wall. It was made of small square pieces of glass which were green with age. As Lania left the hall, she saw in it her face vanishing like a ghost.

Shortly after twelve o'clock, at the correct time for making calls, Herr Markus made his appearance at the Estate. He had come on his bicycle, which he leaned against the wall in the courtyard in order to remove the two metal clips with which he had fastened the striped trousers of his best suit. Herr Markus, as we know, was freshly shaved, barbered and manicured. His suit came from Berlin, for in haughty and insulting fashion he had removed his patronage from Krainerz, the local tailor, who, incidentally, had quickly got his revenge by buying his groceries, etc., at Gustav Keitler's old shop instead of at Markus' Store. Markus was at the top of his form. Since the accident and the arrival of these Berlin people in Lohwinkel, he had been strangely excited and exalted. He felt that this accident was his affair and that these people belonged to him, the banished exile from the great city. Yet, at the same time, he was oppressed by a slight feeling of embarrassment, as he crossed the courtyard of the Estate, for he had never quite got rid of the awe which he had felt as a boy for the landowner and his family. He blinked around through his glasses at the doors and windows. Everything here was silent; two doves, in their pretty love-making, fluttered up into the air and then sank down again; a cat was rubbing its flanks against a rain pipe; a midday atmosphere prevailed, and from a kitchen window at the back came a clatter of pots and pans, accompanied by a long-drawn-out song.



Markus handed his visiting-card to a servant girl with a bandaged head—she was Doctor Persenthein's patient, Lieschen, who suffered from chronic inflammation of the middle-ear—and asked to see Leore Lania. "*Cand. juris* Heinrich Markus," was on the card, "Student of Law Heinrich Markus," a dead man, who had been resurrected for half an hour and now stood in the courtyard, warm in the noonday sun, to wait for a famous actress.

Lania was not to be found at once. Finally Fräulein von Raitzold herself found her at the back of the house in the empty stable. She was looking after a newly-born calf, partly to amuse herself and partly because she was in need of comfort; but chiefly because she was trying in some way to escape from the hours of waiting before Karbon came, and the suspense was almost unbearable.

"Someone wants to see me? What do you mean? Who is it?" she said, as she pulled some straw from her dress.

"Oh, it's only the Jew. The local merchant," Fräulein von Raitzold told her.

"He has come to see me?"

"Yes. He has inquired after you daily. He wrote a long article about the accident for the *Düsswelder Anzeiger*. Munk says that Markus sent off at least twenty telegrams. To newspapers all over Germany."

"Who? Munk? Who is that?"

"He's the clerk in the post office. Markus is the merchant."

"And who wrote the articles?"

"Why, the Jew, of course."

Leore, who had been kneeling by the little calf, in the warm maternal atmosphere of the cow, rose to her feet. There are always complications with these journalists, she thought. Quite suddenly she conceived the desire to

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show herself to some human being—whoever he might be—before she saw Karbon. She must see whether the person would look frightened when he saw what had happened to her face. That everyone in the world was familiar with her former, uninjured face, she simply assumed as a matter of course——

“All right. I’ll come,” she said and left the stable. She stepped outside into the sunshine, as though the sun were an ice-cold, hostile element. I’m not even powdered—she was thinking, as she stopped in the centre of the courtyard in front of Herr Markus, turned upon him her automatic film star’s smile, and anxiously studied his face.

Markus was certainly not courageous enough to look directly at Lania’s injury. He murmured something, bowed, and his eyes avoided her face. While Lania smiled, the wound seemed enormous, yards in length, and the scar seemed as high as a mountain. She felt it very distinctly in her small face.

“Come, let’s sit somewhere in the shade. You wanted to interview me?” she asked in a practised manner and conducted Markus to a bench standing under a broken-down wooden porch. When he was seated next to her, she looked at him not without amusement.

Fräulein von Raitzold’s introduction, the fact that she had twice referred to him as “the Jew” and “the merchant,” had caused Lania to expect a bearded patriarch, a sort of Shylock. But the individual sitting next to her now was a small, young man, rather stolid and a little too chubby, with small drops of perspiration on his forehead, which he was too refined to wipe away, with a rim of street dust on his trousers, and wearing a morning coat, which was too tight for him and of a style that had been fashionable three years before. It was obvious that he treated the occasion with particular solemnity. During the first five minutes, in his struggle with consonants, he

uttered so many stupid and unfinished sentences that it took all her tact and kindness to keep him going.

Herr Markus, for his part, was in this position. As an Intellectual, he did not think much of films; in fact, he came very near despising them. But all the same he attended the cinema assiduously, and a few of Lania's gestures had stuck firmly in his memory as something particularly tender and sweet and fragrant. Furthermore, this little creature for the moment personified for him everything outside Lohwinkel—the Great World, for which he was yearning so miserably. Besides, she was wearing pyjamas. Markus had never in his life sat beside a lady wearing pyjamas. It simply paralysed him, although, as a rule, he thought he could trust to his *savoir-faire* as a man of the world. Besides, he found her far more beautiful in real life than she was on the screen, with her eyelashes pasted together with black paint. Since he had previously seen her only in two dimensions on the screen, he was quite confused to find that she was extraordinarily vivid and real, a body in three dimensions, smelling slightly of the stable.

He began to talk on recklessly, for he was frightened to death lest she might get up and disappear, and this tremendous moment pass away for ever. He sat there as though on the desert island of Salas y Gomez, signalling to a ship, and the ship passing by, passing by and leaving him behind. . . .

"I live here in Lohwinkel as though on the desert island of Salas y Gomez—you remember the story?—" he was saying for the third time. Lania, whose zig-zag course of education had never struck upon this poem by Chamisso, did not know in the slightest what he was talking about. For goodness' sake, don't get so excited, she was thinking impatiently.

"Listen, Herr Markus," she said suddenly, interrupt-



ing him abruptly, for her patience was nearly exhausted. "I want you to look at me very closely. How do you think it looks?" She turned her face towards him, and felt the wound throbbing faster, as she did so. Herr Markus looked at it. Not until now did Lania notice that this little country merchant had human eyes, intelligent, sad eyes. "Is it very bad?" she asked a moment later, and waited.

The condition of Lania's face was as follows: For three days after the local injection of novocaine, her face had been bloated and swollen, distorted and strange. Only since Tuesday had her features begun to relax, and on this Wednesday, her nose and cheeks had somewhat regained their normal shape and proportion. But the mouth was still very red and looked curiously numb and stiff. The upper lip was pulled downwards a little, which gave Lania an expression of strained anxiety. The scar ran from the lips to the nose from where it rose a few millimeters along the side of the nostrils; it was imbedded in red, inflamed flesh and it burned all the time. A small place next to the base of the nose, which was festering slightly, had been covered with a bit of court-plaster. Doctor Persenthein had exposed the scar near the rim of the lips, and it was covered with a thin scab. The entire upper lip, which was still slightly swollen, protruded over the lower lip; and this made Lania look like a vexed child, an expression which she certainly did not wish to have in her bitter-sweet face.

Markus contemplated all this most attentively, made a mental note of it and did not find it very bad. What really moved him was the naked fear he saw reflected in Leore Lania's eyes. He was so damnably sensitive that he was forced to feel everything that others felt. So sensitive was he, that now, as he recognised the actress' fright, he became frightened himself.

“It’s not worth mentioning,” he said uncertainly. Then he cracked his finger-joints a little to fill in the silence which followed. He strained his imagination and found something comforting to say. “I’ll write to the paper saying that your injury is no longer visible,” he promised.

“For what paper?” Leore asked.

“For our little local rag, the *Düsswalder Anzeiger*,” he answered with the forced ironical smile he always assumed for the institutions of Lohwinkel.

“Oh, I see,” Lania said.

“Of course, I can also send a message to Berlin as well—I’ll try——” Markus added quickly. “I was the first, you know, to send a report about the accident. The editor wrote to thank me. My message was reprinted in papers all over the country. Here—do you want to read it?”

With some misgivings, Lania watched him put his hand to his breast pocket. She knew this gesture so well, and had so often seen people take out hopeless scenarios. A large packet of newspaper cuttings was produced. Herr Markus was perspiring more than ever; his best trousers rucked up on his leg and exposed his thick grey socks, and underneath them the creases in his pants, which looked equally thick. Herr Markus had placed his hat and a pair of kid gloves on the bench next to him, in the way that fashionable gentlemen in old-fashioned comedies always did. She took the cuttings politely and glanced at the article, with which she was already perfectly familiar. “You ought to have been a writer——” she said, absent-mindedly.

That remark struck home. It went straight to the heart of Herr Markus. He was just twenty-six years old; but when he was sixty-eight he would still quote that remark of hers that he ought to have been a writer. Lania, on the other hand, had turned to other matters.

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“ Did you call on Peter Karbon, too ? How did he seem ? Was he badly injured ? ”

“ Herr Karbon—oh, I think he’s looking extremely well. He seems to have a very strong constitution——”

“ I should say he has ! ”

“ Besides, he has been extremely well nursed. Frau Doktor Persenthein——”

“ Oh, yes, that tall person. I don’t like her.”

“ But she is a very estimable lady,” Herr Markus said. Everything he said sounded so stilted and forced, compared with the casual, free and easy tones of the actress. He was conscious of this himself, but he could not help it. He realised now that his suit was too tight ; everyone in Lohwinkel wore suits too tight, and collars too high, he suddenly perceived. With these people from Berlin, everything was freer, looser—their clothes, their gestures, their thoughts. In Berlin——

“ What do you think of Doctor Persenthein—if that’s his name ? ” asked Lania, breaking in upon his thoughts.

“ Oh, he’s not as bad as people make out,” replied Markus. That reply was so comforting, that her blood again began to beat desperately in the festering little wound. “ I went to see Herr Albert, too. That gentleman has completely recovered.”

“ Who ? Oh, Albert ? You mean—the young one ! ” Lania said, surprised. She had forgotten him so completely that it was an effort to remember what he looked like. And all she could remember, all that came to her mind in a flash, was his fighting face ducking behind his arms and glaringly illuminated by the strong lights round the ring.

“ That gentleman got off scot free. He can consider himself lucky.”

“ Yes. He can consider himself lucky. And he’s so innocent, that little fellow. That’s why a sweet little



guardian angel always goes about with him," Lania said. "How awful I look," she added. "It's dreadful not to be able to sleep off the effects of one's veronal. I can't sleep here properly. It's too quiet, it makes one think too much."

She looked round her. She was conscious of a smell of tar, drowsiness, crumbling mortar next to wild grape-vines on the wall of the house and, in the background, the patient and assiduous cackling of a hen.

"It's like being in a dream. And one is a bit afraid of regaining consciousness. Sitting still—it's difficult to put up with it, you know. For us stage people, you see, whether one dopes or whether one works, it's really all the same. When you stop doing either, you go phut." ("Doping," Markus was thinking. It sounded so matter-of-fact that he gave a little shudder.) "One just sits and thinks. When it's so quiet, something goes on thinking within one, whether one wants to or not. I have had some queer thoughts, I can tell you. Something must be wrong, if one's entire life depends on a small scratch on the face. One really ought not to live like that, so dependent on externals, a mere façade. Something must be wrong——"

It can hardly be said that Lania was speaking to Markus, or perhaps he seemed too unimportant for her to interrupt her monologue on his account. There was also just a touch of the *poseuse* in what she said. But Herr Markus was set going by these observations as though in response to a cue which he had been expecting in the depths of his consciousness.

"Yes, *gnädige Frau*," he said with a sigh, "but who of us does live the right sort of life?" Lania, appalled by the banality of this remark, raised the pencilled line of her plucked eyebrows; but he felt convinced that he had made a profound observation.

“I, for instance, if I may be allowed to mention myself——” he said, suddenly very tense. “May I talk about myself? I am not at all where I ought to be, my life is completely unsuited to me. You, my dear lady, will have realised that I don’t belong to a small provincial town, I belong through and through to the big cities. I am a citizen of the world, almost, I might say, a cosmopolitan——” as he spoke he became so excited and overwrought that the muscles of his calves began to vibrate under the grey socks. “I am stuck in a lonely outpost: but I keep on, *gnädige Frau*. I read a great deal and I have connections with the entire intellectual world. My correspondence—I’d like to show you my correspondence. I have received letters from the most distinguished people in the world—Thomas Mann—Anatole France—Einstein——”

“Oh,” Lania said, slightly surprised. “What for?”

“Well, I just write to them. When I’ve read a book or heard a lecture on the wireless or a concert, then I write a letter and then I always get an answer, or rather, usually I get an answer. I have photographs—Bruno Walter—Chaliapin——”

“I’ll send you a photo, too,” Lania said automatically. She had now summed up Herr Markus. Such letters she received by the score.

“Yes, those are really great people. But in Lohwinkel I’m quite isolated. I don’t fit in with anyone.”

“Why is that?”

It took some time for Herr Markus to answer. “Yes, I’ll tell you why that is, *gnädige Frau*,” he said, in tense and measured tones. “You will probably not have noticed it, but I am a Jew.”

“Well, what of it?” Lania asked. She had noticed his solemnity without understanding its cause.

“What of it? But, my dear lady, to be a Jew is a

destiny. It is—how shall I express it?—it makes one so—so lonely——”

“What—lonely?” said Lania. “You really can’t mean that.” She was forced to laugh. “You ought to come to Berlin——”

“I have been to Berlin. I studied at the University of Berlin for several terms,” Markus said gloomily.

“Well—then, you know all about it. As to being a Jew—I don’t see why you think that’s anything special. I have been married four times and two of my husbands were Jews. Karbon is a Jew, too.”

“Karbon! A Jew?”

“Yes—or his father, or his grandfather. It really doesn’t make any difference.”

“Herr Karbon—but he looks more—I think he looks more like a Swede.”

“All right. Call it Swedish, if you like,” Lania said. It gave her a slight feeling of pleasure to pronounce Karbon’s name. At the moment she saw the gleam of his red head quite distinctly, and even felt the taste of his lips.

“In a town like Lohwinkel at any rate it is a different matter. Life is hardly bearable,” said Markus with finality. In his thoughts he had made a complete survey of his exiled ill-adjusted life.

They’re all a bit cracked here, Lania was thinking. “You good people exaggerate everything,” she said. “You take everything so frightfully seriously; perhaps it’s because there are so few of you here——”

“Perhaps. Of course, a lot of things here are singular, which might seem quite different in a big city. We must put up with that. Oh, *gnädige Frau, gnädige Frau*,” he said imploringly, “if I could only explain to you how difficult it all is, how unbearable it is at times. Take music, for instance. I am passionately fond of music, I play the



violin myself, and not too badly. We have a little musical society, a choir and a little orchestra. The conductor in Schaffenburg even comes over every Tuesday for a rehearsal. And I'm not admitted. They won't admit me, *gnädige Frau*. Or take Chamber Music. There's a small circle that plays Chamber Music; they play together at the mayor's or at the notary's. The Manager of the Savings Bank plays the first violin, rottenly, and the mayor's daughter plays the second violin. They haven't anyone to play the viola. But there's more chance of the Angermann Tower collapsing than my being admitted—that's only one example," he said, trembling with the wish to hold the actress' interest in his fate just a moment longer. "I could tell you things, I could give you examples of what I mean, one's pride has so many sore wounds. . . ."

But now Lania had had enough of it. "Yes—of course. Music. But you have the Wireless——" she said graciously, but absent-mindedly.

Markus fell silent. It seemed to him as though the courtyard was filled with blocks of stone which he had cast off, and as though equally weighty blocks were still pressing on his chest. He had poured out his heart. Now he felt more depressed than ever. He put the cuttings back into his pocket. "I mustn't take up more of your time," he murmured.

"Yes—I must go in to lunch. It was very kind of you to come and see me," Lania answered smoothly. Markus got up from the bench. "If you write to the papers——" Lania said, walking with him towards his bicycle and kicking an empty jam-tin in front of her as she walked; then she remembered her appearance again sadly, and that she must face Karbon. "I say—can one purchase such a thing as face powder here? My vanity bag, in which I kept mine, has been smashed to pieces."

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“Vanity-bag,” thought Markus, impressed. “Of course you can get powder here, any kind you want, German, French, American. There again you underestimate Lohwinkel. I have only the regulation stock in my shop, but at Kuhammer’s, the hairdresser’s, you can get everything. He has a very good assistant too; I always have my nails manicured by her. A smart little person,” Markus said, and now, as he was saying good-bye, he at last achieved the dashing manner for which he had been struggling all the time. It was not until he was a good ten minutes away from the Estate that he got down from his bicycle and fastened the clips on his best trousers.

Lania wandered about the yard kicking at the jam-tin for a little while, and then went in to lunch. Herr von Raitzold was just leaving in his old carriage by the back entrance. A cloud rose above the rose-beds; it looked like a bar of metal flat against the sky. A storm was threatening and, just as the sun became veiled, a biting smell of ammonia drifted over from the manure pit in the back yard. Herr von Raitzold was driving the carriage himself; Leore caught sight of his dispirited back just as the carriage disappeared from view. His sister stood at the railing waving after him, but her gesture was useless and meaningless, as no one took any notice of it.

“My brother asks to be excused, he has gone to attend an unexpected conference with the people at the District Savings Bank,” she said. Up to now, the meals at the Estate had been served with a certain formality; to-day this was not the case. Fräulein von Raitzold disappeared into the dairy, and Leore, alone in front of the large round mahogany table with the dolphin feet, was given a little roast chicken, which she did not enjoy very much because she had known the chicken personally. It had been dark grey with white spots and an enterprising

little red comb, and yesterday it had still been strutting across the courtyard. Leore laid down her knife and fork ; the stitches in her lip made eating painful and tiresome. Suddenly she felt deadly weary of everything and completely sick with herself.

"I'm fed-up with everything," she thought. This was a rather vulgar refrain which in times of depression pursued her incessantly for days. "I'm fed-up, fed-up, fed-up, fed-up."

What next ? She looked up the hairdresser's number in the telephone book and talked vivaciously to the excited assistant until powder, cream and a lip-stick had been selected. Herr Polzer, who took turns with Herr Munk in attending to the telephone at the post office, listened in to this conversation with interest ; it was unusual in Lohwinkel for ladies to order such things by telephone, though the ladies were not unmindful of their appearance, and even attended a course of gymnastics on Mondays and Wednesdays. The young lady at the hairdresser's, with that bond of intimacy which speedily unites women discussing cosmetic secrets, would not let Lania go, and began to tell her the story of her life, and what strange circumstances had caused her to stray to Lohwinkel. That affair of the baby and her story about the gentleman and the friend and the boss—one could not tell whether she meant three persons or only one—Leore hung up the receiver when the story became too sad and complicated. She did not want to hear any more outbursts from people who had come to grief in this town. I'll sleep a little, she thought, and she felt the need of rest.

But she could not go to sleep. To sleep meant to lie still, and lying still meant thinking. Her pillow grew hot and a few flies with maddening persistence buzzed backwards and forwards from the lamp to the bed and from



the bed to the lamp, which hung from bronze chains, with electric wires wound round them. Half-past one, quarter to two, two o'clock. Five minutes past two. Seven minutes past two. Then time stood entirely still and immovable. Leore counted out how many hours it had been since she had seen Karbon. Just before the accident he had been posing as the world traveller and had begun to tell one of his African stories. Then later she was still giddy with her head against his thigh and she had thought that she was bleeding to death. But this had happened somewhere outside time and space. One hundred and fourteen hours without Peter Karbon. One hundred and fourteen hours of fear, pain, torment, anxiety, despair. She had passed through many regions of hell, which she had not known before, during those one hundred and fourteen hours.

Leore Lania was twenty-four years old. As she smiled up at the ceiling, she looked like a very old woman. When one needs them, they are never there, she was thinking. When it comes to a crisis, one is always alone. "They" were the men with whom she had dealings. One hundred and fourteen hours. If Peter came at four o'clock two more hours would be added to the sum. If he came at five—but it was not impossible that he might not come until six. Leore looked at her watch. Nine minutes past two. The flies. The mirror. The wound on her face. . . .

Peter Karbon arrived at twenty minutes to six. At the suggestion of Herr Bollmann, the landlord of the White Swan, Herr von Raitzold had brought him back in his old carriage. During the drive the landowner had been exceedingly talkative and excited, as serious men of his type become only in times of despair; but as soon as his hand was on the door-handle of his room, he suddenly stopped short and disappeared with a few

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muttered words, leaving Peter to find his own way to the guest-room upstairs.

Leore had seen the tall man arrive. She had been standing for long at the window, and her heart was pounding. But when Karbon came into the room, she made an exceedingly composed and sensible impression. She had remained standing near the window, and had intentionally turned the uninjured side of her face towards the door as though she were about to be "shot" in a film. Just as he was opening the door, however, she changed her mind entirely and turned her whole face towards him. Her eyes questioned him far more darkly and excitedly than she knew herself, until she had drawn him to her and had laid her hand in his as though in some large, warm, familiar bed. Lania had curious hands, small and restless with extraordinarily small bones, but they were so strong that she often met a surprised look in people's eyes when she shook hands with them. Karbon, too, at this moment, was feeling a familiar surprise when he touched her hand, the peculiarities of which he had forgotten during the past few days. He held the hand close for a brief moment, as though he were studying it, and then he released it.

"Well, Pete," Leore said.

"Well, Leore," Karbon said. He did not say Pretty, he said Leore. She moved a step away from him, and leaned her back against the window.

"Nice of you to come, Peter."

"This is the first day that the doctor has let me go out. Otherwise——"

"I couldn't have received you before, either. How are you? Any broken bones?"

"Thank you. I'm quite all right. And you?"

"Oh—I am too."

This time Peter Karbon was not wearing his motoring suit. Instead he had on a soft, grey flannel suit, which was

typically English. Leore carefully inhaled the scent of English cigarettes which his hand had left in hers. She was suffering profoundly, because Peter's gaze, too, lacked the courage to look her straight in the face. (Markus, too, had avoided her face, a bad sign.) Instead, Peter was looking past her.

"A smoke, Peter?"

"Thank you."

"Where are you putting up? Is it all right?"

"So, so. I moved to-day to the inn, a funny little pub."

"Why did you move?"

"Oh—only because I didn't feel comfortable in the doctor's house."

"Yes, I know. The fuss they make when one wants a bath."

As, for the moment, the conversation did not seem to progress very well, Leore walked through the room and out on to the terrace. She was again wearing her pyjamas. For half an hour she had tried on all her dresses, rescued from the demolished trunk, but she had finally discarded them again. As Karbon followed her out of the room she was very conscious of her hips and swinging gait. In Peter's presence she always had this strong, happy feeling of possession about her own body. She felt this in Karbon's presence—otherwise she felt it only at rare moments during the production of a film, when gramophone music was creating the proper atmosphere and the Jupiter lights were blinding; and when she was wringing passionate tears from her eyes, by order, at the proper moment, and trembling with soulful intensity.

"Now, let's have a look at you," Peter said, and then he looked at her. She touched the inside of the wound with her tongue, it was still painful.

"Not worth mentioning, Pretty. You look splendid,"



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he said, and she was frightened. He must be feeling very sorry for her to pay her compliments now.

"Was it very bad?" he asked gently, taking her face in his hands.

"Yes, very."

Peter Karbon rubbed his nose against her hair for a moment, saying as he did so: "I suppose it wouldn't be considered hygienic to kiss you?"

"No. The doctor is very keen on aseptics."

Karbon gave a little grunt, released her and sat down again. Lania felt the new, hopelessly distant atmosphere between them. She was very familiar with the signs that indicate the dissolution of a human relationship.

"We've become a little estranged, haven't we?" she said brightly.

"Yes. It's funny—after an accident like that, one seems somehow to be living outside time. It might be years since we left Berlin. Or does it seem so only to me because I had a slight concussion of the brain?"

"No. I feel it too——"

"I feel that I am so very much responsible for the whole thing. I don't know how I——"

"Nonsense. You weren't even driving yourself, Peter," she said quickly.

They were silenced by their thoughts of the dead Fobianke. Then, after a little while, their conversation turned to other subjects and continued in a tentative fashion.

"I am sleeping very badly, Pete."

"Yes, I know. At first one keeps on driving into the tree in one's sleep—but that will pass off. I've almost got rid of it myself, and everyone knows how tough your nerves are."

Leore stretched herself like a cat, when this selfish Pete appealed to her nervous strength. Well, yes, I am tough,

I am tough, she thought. If one is tough, people exploit one, and anyone who can carry burdens is sure to get a load of them. Again she smiled as though she were very, very old. Peter Karbon knew this smile well.

"Macaco," he said.

"What is that?"

"Melancholia among primitive creatures. A smile from the primeval forest," he replied.

Leore changed her expression at once. "Heard anything from the young one?" she asked.

"Yes. He wrote me a model letter in English. They're polishing him up very nicely there at his college."

"Who—oh, I'm not talking about your son. I'm talking about our young one, Franz Albert."

"Yes, he came to see me twice accompanied by his hostess. Hasn't he been to see you?"

"Of course, almost daily," Leore answered. It was a complete lie.

"There you are, he was allowed to come and see you and I was not wanted."

"Jealous?" Leore asked, opening her mouth questioningly, and assuming a slightly affected expression of expectation, the effects of which she had tried out on the films. But it was rather a pitiable attempt because of the red scar over her lips.

"Of course, I am jealous. Frightfully jealous," Peter said. If he had really been jealous, he would never, never have admitted it, and Leore knew this.

"Oh, Pete——" she said softly, and then she fell silent.

He became suddenly serious. Poor child, he thought, pitying her; and pity is the deadliest feeling that can be offered to a woman.

He looked at her for a long time intently and not a little sadly. Leore tried to smile; but she was not very successful, so she began to smoke.

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Leore Lania and Peter Karbon, who now sat opposite each other bandying insincerities across a void, had left Berlin as lovers. Yes, one could say that they were lovers, even though the love which united them was the love of this modern age : without any foundation in the past and without any regard for the future. Without any obligation, but with a complete understanding of the unreliability of every human relationship. Shy and undemonstrative about their own emotions, they had a respect for each other's freedom, which was perhaps more precious than faithfulness and a sense of duty. They had left Berlin without taking with them any yesterdays or to-morrows as ballast, but they had completely surrendered to the present. They had had an accident, death had passed them by so near that its dark rustling wings had almost touched their temples, and now they were sitting there, as though on the opposite banks of a river which had suddenly gone dry.

"Yes, Leore—that's how it is——" Peter said at last, expressing the conclusion of his long train of thoughts. Decent fellow that he was, he was now considering how he could deceive her ; while she, since the first pressure of his hand, had begun to withdraw from him into a new but familiar loneliness, only hoping, if possible, to do so without loss of dignity.

She stepped behind him and laid her hand for a moment on his strong red hair. "Tell me, Pete, what's the matter ?" she asked softly.

"Nothing particular. Just a bit bowled-over once more."

"In love?" Leore asked behind him, and held her breath. Peter nodded his head like a schoolboy.

"Well, well—he's in love again ! Can one fall in love even in Lohwinkel ?" she asked. Her throat had suddenly gone dry.



“Yes,” he answered seriously. “Naturally, it’s a different kind of love——” he added after a moment’s reflection.

“A nice kind, Pete?”

“A different variety. A different weight, you know. It means more to the people here than to people like ourselves; it’s not so much in the air. In the first place it’s—a Sin, and that, of course, is a terrific affair. Have you ever in your life thought that you were committing a Sin? Now, you see what I mean. But *I* am right up to my eyes in Sin, and that, of course, is quite enchanting. One has to make efforts, one has to overcome difficulties, it is all so serious. One must fight for a woman, seduce her, capture her or whatever all these words mean. Ridiculous, I grant you, Leore; but at the same time, one feels that one is a real man. The love business that we’re used to, is a bit flabby, don’t you agree?”

“I didn’t know that you were such an emotional athlete and prize cock——” Leore said, taking her hand away from his red thatch of hair. “You are introducing your ideas of sport into it a bit, aren’t you, Pete?”

Peter Karbon considered this remark; he thought of Elisabeth Persenthein, and his thoughts and feelings were exact and complete. His thoughts of her sank deep down within him with a strong, happy and expectant warmth. “Sport—no, not at all. That’s just what it is not. I realise clearly that I am undertaking a great responsibility. You know, this woman is something quite different. You know her only superficially, but you should see how——”

“Thank you. Don’t make a speech, please,” Lania said, but she restrained herself quickly and said, “Will you smoke?”

“No, thanks.”

Silence. They were both thinking of Elisabeth. He

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was thinking of a woman, made of some very precious and pure material, who must be rescued, awakened and brought to life ; while Lania was thinking of a dull-faced woman in a smock apron, who carried about with her an atmosphere of petty cares and washing soap.

"Hospital nurses are always captivating," she said. She simply could not repress this remark.

"I have a feeling that life is offering me one more great chance in this woman. I simply must cling to that chance. Can't you understand, Pretty ?"

"Oh—I understand all right, Peter. But isn't it a bit too early for you to indulge in claustrophobia ?"

"You are very kind. You are very decent to me," Peter Karbon said, laying his opened hand across the table in front of Lania, but she did not touch it. "You are making it all so easy for me."

"Well, it was obvious from the beginning that neither of us would wait for the other in a dark corner with a bottle of vitriol, when it was all over," Leore said, speaking with her cigarette in the corner of her mouth and screwing up her eyes a little on account of the smoke. But it's not all over, she thought, waiting intently for Peter Karbon also to say that it was not all over. But Peter displayed the preoccupied deafness of all men who have just fallen in love. His eyes returned to Leore's face, which had grown smaller in the last ten minutes. "Really you look splendid," he said politely. "You needn't worry about your injury at all. The doctor says that the redness, too, will disappear. With the best will in the world, we could not rush the Insurance Company for more than ten marks for the whole damage."

Lania did not even smile at this jest ; instead, she grew polite. "How is your car ?"

"Thanks, they've towed her off to Schaffenburg. Apparently she can be mended."

“That’s good.”

“I’ll never drive in her again, anyway. I’ll never drive any car again. I’ve acquired a complex about it. I’ve always needed to have a complex of some sort.”

“But, my dear man, how on earth will you move about?”

“By train.”

“Oh,” Lania said, slightly surprised. Her heart, meanwhile, was reasserting itself. It lay alone and isolated in her breast like a little animal in pain. The moment had come for her to free herself completely from Pete; she had gone on talking blindly for a few seconds in order to bring herself to this point. Everything in life happened so quietly; one smoked cigarettes while a “we” died, and gave place to “I” and “you.”

“When are you leaving?” she asked.

“*Ça dépend*,” Peter Karbon answered slowly, looking at her attentively. Now he, too, felt the separation and the decision implied in this little, quiet question. “Hadn’t I better fit in my plans with yours?” he asked weakly.

“No, thanks. Very nice of you, Peter, but I’m expecting my husband.”

“I thought that you and he hadn’t been friendly since the divorce?”

“I don’t mean Richard. I’m speaking about Erich.”

“Your first husband?”

“My second.”

“Yes, of course. I always mix them up.”

They sat there opposite each other for a few moments longer, vacant and undecided. The heavy storm cloud had now expanded into a thin mantle of vapour, under which the landscape sweltered, while dusk came on. A regiment of starlings was drilling; they flew up into the air in a black mass, circled about in the air and then flew down again. Lieschen in her wooden clogs shuffled



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across the courtyard to the well and back. Just then a motor-car drove in through the dilapidated gateway, and making a curve up to the steps, stopped in front of the house.

"It's come to fetch you," Lania said, getting up.

"No, it's not. You know I won't go in a car any more. I'm going to walk."

"Shall I come with you a little way?"

"That would be charming of you. A little way. Someone is coming up the road to meet me," Peter Karbon said, clearing his throat. Leore thought he was being very funny. It was such a relief to be able to see how funny he was with his infatuation for this gawky person in a tiny provincial town.

"I suppose I ought really to stay here. I'm expecting Franz Albert," she said. It was a shamefully cheap lie.

"This evening, by the way, I'll see you on the screen. I'm going to the cinema," he said, already on the stairs.

"What are they showing?"

"*Adventure in Monte Carlo*. The entire town is going. They're all terribly excited already."

"What a scream! That antiquated rubbish. Why on earth are you going?"

Peter Karbon shrugged his shoulders. He glanced furtively at his wrist-watch, which, since the accident, had been going only by fits and starts. Elisabeth must now already be on her way to meet him, she probably had reached the forest path. "So the young one is coming now to see you?" he asked precipitately. "Give him my love. I'll be seeing you to-morrow again, Leore."

Lania plucked a tiny thread from off his shoulder. It was one of those little gestures by which a woman shows that she belongs to a man.

"Farewell, O burgher of Lohwinkel!" she said

laughing. She remained standing at the top of the stairs, while he left without once looking back.

Leore Lania returned to her room upstairs and sat down stiffly on the side of her bed, as though by so doing she might keep herself from feeling the misery which invaded her. Karbon, meanwhile, at the foot of the stairs met a pleasant gentleman who bowed to him and whom he seemed vaguely to remember. It was Doctor Ohmann, the Mayor of Lohwinkel, who after the accident had paid a courtesy visit to all the victims. Doctor Ohmann had come to the Estate a few minutes before for very special reasons.

"I heard in the town that you were out at the Estate," he said to Peter Karbon. "I shall only be a little time here with Raitzold. If you don't mind waiting a bit, I can drive you back in my car."

Peter declined. He seemed then and there to see Elisabeth walking towards him in the forest. This attracted him, as nothing had attracted him since his youth.

Doctor Ohmann knocked at the door of the hall, which was also Herr von Raitzold's study, and went in.

"You left such an urgent letter for me at the Town Hall that I thought it best to come and see you as soon as possible," he said to the landowner, who stood majestically in the centre of the room, with the knuckles of his right hand resting on the table, looking as though he were receiving the mayor in audience. True, the hand on the table was shaking, and the whole man was trembling with some secret and irrepressible emotion.

"That is—extraordinarily good of you. It really was not necessary for you——" he said, coughing.

"I had the impression that it was urgently necessary, if we are not to have another stupid incident in this town," the mayor replied. He spoke purposely in rather

careless style and in dialect in order to make things easier.

"Please be seated. A cigar?" Raitzold said stiffly.

"Thanks, I don't smoke," the mayor answered, and this increased the landowner's antipathy to him.

Herr von Raitzold and Doctor Ohmann respected each other personally; but they were political adversaries. The mayor considered the landowner too reactionary, and the landowner, in turn, thought the mayor too progressive.

"I am sorry that you missed me at the Town Hall," the mayor said with the politeness of the man in the stronger position. "I was over at Schaffenburg. I've asked them to send over some police. I don't like the look of things in our little town at present. Since the arrival of this Communist, Obanger has been standing on its head. They're sending over six men. But that won't interest you. You are concerned, I assume, with the Sonnentreppchen vineyard?"

"What? Yes—that's to say, no—I'm interested in the Sonnentreppchen, of course. But that's only a part of the whole business. I thought I'd got a stroke when I was informed to-day that all four mortgages had been transferred to this Herr Profet."

"Well, that is really what we have always been fearing, you as well as I. It's not a surprise, Herr von Raitzold."

"On the contrary, it is a surprise to learn that the District Savings Bank would commit such a breach of faith. It was always an express stipulation, a most stringent stipulation, that these mortgages were never to be smuggled over to Herr Profet."

This expression "smuggled over" caused the mayor's eyebrows to twitch. He fixed his gaze on one of the brown damp stains on an old hunting print hanging next to the gun cupboard, and he grew a shade more formal.



“The District Savings Bank did not ‘smuggle over’ the mortgages to Herr Profet, as you say. They were taken over partly by Baerwald’s Wool Factory, and partly by Krüger in Düsselwald. Kampers redeemed them from these parties, and it was through Kampers that Profet got control of them all.”

“The directors of the Savings Bank must have known quite well that all these Baerwalds and Krügers and Kampers were only men-of-straw. You, too, Herr Ohmann, must have known that perfectly well.”

“The Savings Bank could not afford to carry your mortgages any longer. We cannot accept the responsibility—in connection with any of our agreements—to send detectives after people to see whether they are merely men-of-straw, when these people are willing to take over from us such flimsy securities as your mortgages, Herr von Raitzold. We granted you postponements of interest, we granted you postponements of taxes. And, in the meantime, you are letting the Estate go to rack and ruin, and are cutting down your timber. Everything is mortgaged far beyond its real value.”

Herr von Raitzold sprang to his feet. His hands were white and his forehead a bluish colour. “You say I’m letting it go to rack and ruin. My God! I—as though it were in *my* power to do anything, as though I could produce harvests by magic!” he exclaimed. “Let this Herr Profet, this blacksmith or whatever he was, try to run the Estate, let him show what he can get out of it. It’s unbearable; it’s just pain and torture to work your fingers to the bone, and get nothing at the end of it all. I’m letting it go to ruin, I’m letting the Raitzold Estate go to ruin, you say? But there’s one thing you don’t understand, Herr Ohmann. You may be a good lawyer, but you don’t understand what this bit of land, what a

vineyard like Sonnentreppchen can mean to one of us. If I were to hand it over to a man like that Profet——”

“Herr Profet has probably other plans in regard to the property. He is a man who knows how to make every bit of soil pay.”

“Pay? How? Make it pay—that’s just an empty phrase. Make it pay, indeed!”

“He wants to enlarge his factory. He wants to build. He can’t go on running his factory in the old sheds of a former dyeworks for ever, that’s certain. He has a plan for a new building at the back of the wall.”

“How? By the wall? What? That’s where the vineyards begin,” stuttered the landowner. He took his cigar out of his mouth, and his mouth remained gaping. His jaw dropped at the incomprehensibility of what he had heard. The mayor shrugged his shoulders.

“It isn’t possible!” Raitzold shouted, banging the table. “That isn’t possible,” he repeated softly, and now he trembled quite openly, and he found it difficult even to breathe.

“As matters stand, there isn’t much that can be done to prevent it, I fear,” the mayor answered carefully. “You see, as things are——”

“Herr Bürgermeister—Herr Doktor—Ohmann—you *must* prevent this from happening. After all, you were born in this district. You must understand that it’s impossible. One can’t allow a megalomaniac to build his sheds on the vineyard—a vineyard—why that’s a vineyard, Herr Doktor, that’s not a—why, if I were to taste a hundred wines blindfolded, I could pick out the Sonnentreppchen wine, I can smell the soil in it. It’s a bit of soil, can’t you understand that? If you can’t understand, how can I explain it to you? If I’d been willing to do that, I might have made a fortune out of the Estate long ago. Profet has made me offers for years. But I kept

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saying 'no' and 'no' and 'no.' And now the man is to grab the land for nothing? For a beggarly two hundred and fifty thousand marks? Has he brought things to this pass? Has he got as far as this with all his manœuvrings——?"

"To my knowledge, Profet did not make up his mind at all easily to put up this sum. He runs no small risk by so doing—even though you call it a mere bagatelle. Profet, too, has plenty to worry about. Things are not going any too well at the factory," the mayor said, with his gaze still on the old hunting print, which portrayed a stag at bay with a grotesque muscular distortion. He had the uncomfortable feeling that he was defending a matter that really went against the grain. He stopped; he heard the landowner fighting for breath, and he became strangely moved and alarmed. When Raitzold began to speak again, he seemed calmer than before.

"You were kind enough, Herr Bürgermeister, to come out to see me personally," he said composedly. "I cannot think that you did this merely to speak for Herr Profet."

"I hurried out here, Herr von Raitzold, because your letter was so—how shall I express it?—so threatening. I wanted to pacify you."

At this Raitzold merely smiled, a deprecatory little smile, which, haughty and senseless as it was, remained there under his moustache. He went over to the old high desk, at which he had been working all afternoon, and rapped his knuckles on the sheets of paper, which lay there in a loose pile. "I have started to work out a scheme," he said. "I shall be able to give it to you to-morrow or the day after. I am proposing that the town take over the Estate, that it is turned into a municipal domain and that I myself stay here as tenant farmer. Under certain specified conditions, which I am working



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out and detailing here, I should be prepared to hand the Estate over to the town and to accept the tenancy. I am convinced that the Town Council——”

This sounded sensible enough ; but really the whole scheme was hopelessly impracticable from every point of view. Only a man on the brink of a precipice could have clung to such a fantastic idea.

“ But, good heavens, what can the Town Council do with the Estate ? ” the mayor asked, kindly enough. “ We don’t even know how we can meet our own municipal debts.”

“ With the help of a little capital the Estate could be turned into a model farm. The wine—the dairy—our experiments with American wheat—my sister has organised a horticultural department——”

The mayor waved aside these suggestions with a motion of his hand, and Herr von Raitzold fell silent and left his desk. His brain felt numbed from all the hours of trouble he had had with those rows and rows of unintelligible figures.

“ My sister has organised a horticultural department,” he repeated weakly. He went to the window and opened it with a jerk. The evening poured into the room. From afar came the smell of burning potato-tops and from nearby the scent of bedewed nut trees. The dusk was turning into darkness, and in the grassy garden behind the house the birds suddenly burst into song, and as suddenly fell silent. Herr von Raitzold was struggling for breath, but in vain, for since the war he had been suffering from asthma, and during the entire conversation he had, in fact, been struggling against an attack, which he felt coming on. In the courtyard the pump handle creaked in its own peculiar way ; it was a homely and familiar sound which the landowner had known since his childhood. Never before had he listened consciously to

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this sound, but now, exhausted as he was, he heard it. "One thing is certain: as long as I live I shall never leave the Estate," he said, looking out of the window, without turning round. It was as though he were speaking more to the well than to the mayor.

"Don't do anything foolish, Raitzold, we shall consider what can be done," Doctor Ohmann was saying from inside the room; it was a meaningless phrase, and the landowner knew it. Suddenly, upstairs, a piano, thin and out of tune, began to play a fox-trot, a piquant and bizarre popular song, which gramophone records had made known even in Lohwinkel, so that schoolboys and postmen whistled it in the street.

"Our guest," said Herr von Raitzold, and with a strained smile he returned to the conventions of life.

"Oh," said the mayor respectfully. "Yes, we seem to be swarming here with 'big guns,' as they call them in Berlin. How is the lady?"

"Better, thanks."

"This motor-car accident has upset the town in all sorts of ways," said the mayor, moving towards the door. "The people are positively bewitched. This afternoon there was a revolt even in the Gymnasium. Burhenne came to me wringing his hands, but I can't help him. He'll simply have to learn to keep pace with youth. You see, that's how it is; you have your guests and your pleasure, and I have all the work. Now I have to go to Obanger for the cinema performance. . . ."

"And you call that work," the landowner said in his best military manner. God alone knew what an effort it cost him to speak in this easy tone.

"I'm attending it, so to say, in an official capacity. The situation out in Obanger is a little alarming. Most of the workmen downed tools to-day," replied the mayor as he walked out into the courtyard towards his car. "To-day

is Wednesday,—on—let me see—on Saturday the Town Council will meet and I will again bring your affairs before the meeting,” he said as he stepped into his car. He felt that he had acted diplomatically and that he had turned the landowner away from his gloomy thoughts of suicide and incendiarism.

The car sped away, its headlights cutting segments out of the darkness. Upstairs the fox-trot continued, the tune became maddening because Lania went over it again and again. When Herr von Raitzold returned to his study, he found his sister there. She was wearing the trousers of his old uniform, which indicated that she had been working in the stables.

“I have sent for the vet. I think the two-year-old cow will calve to-day. Kilker thinks it certain. I did not want to disturb you,” she said, but she got no answer. Herr von Raitzold opened a drawer in his desk, put inside it carefully the outline of his scheme, and took out a medicine case.

“Would you like dinner soon?” his sister asked. He shook his head.

“Have you still work to do?”

No, he thought. It's no use. But he did not answer. His sister glanced at him. He poured a powder on an ash-tray, lit it and began laboriously to inhale the soothing fumes. His hands clutched the edge of the table, and he bent over, with blue veins, with fear in his eyes, fighting for breath and life. His sister went up to him and patted his neck as though he were a horse.

“You will be better in a moment, Fichli,” she said to comfort him, and called him by the old childish name which came from the days when, as children, they had sat together under the currant bushes. And true enough the attack did cease after a little while. The fox-trot upstairs continued.



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"Better?" his sister asked.

"Yes, better, now."

"Are you coming to the stables now?"

"No."

"Are you going to bed?"

"No," he said, and buttoned up his coat.


"What are you going to do then?"

"I'm going to Obanger. To the cinema," Herr von Raitzold answered.

It was the most astonishing reply his sister had ever heard from him in her whole life. While she remained standing there, looking at him in surprise, he opened his gun cupboard, took out his revolver, put it into his hip pocket—a series of mechanical movements which he always made before going out—and left the room.

The fumes from the asthma powder with their bitter tang still floated in the room. . . .

In order to reach the hall of Oertchen's restaurant, where the film was to be shown, one had to pass along a long alley of empty beer barrels which filled the air with a damp sour smell. At the entrance to this alley sat Oertchen's son at a little table, selling tickets; there were two classes of seats and the money was heaped up in front of him in a soup plate. At the entrance of the hall stood Herr Oertchen himself. He took the tickets and welcomed the better-class people of whom a surprising number attended his establishment on this particular evening; whereas, usually, only people from Obanger came to the cinema performances. The performance was to begin at seven o'clock, but already, at half-past six, a rather queer crowd had collected, and the entrance to Oertchen's hall, with its buzzing crowd of people, clinging together in little groups, and streaming forward in concentric curves, reminded one of the hole



in a beehive. Most of the workmen from the factory were there ; they slouched along in groups which included also the older men who did not, as a rule, spend their money on cinemas. Even old Hockling, the foreman, was among them ; he stood in front of the glass case with Lania's pictures, smiling somewhat foolishly and lasciviously, as he looked at the various poses in which she had been photographed.

The men had left their wives at home, and they had come as though they were attending a meeting that concerned men only. It looked as if they were expecting something to happen, though they did not know quite what ; and such in fact was the case. But apart from this, they were also expecting something quite definite to happen ; namely, some decisive intelligence from Berlin, marching orders, which Pank had promised to send them before he left. It was to be a decision as to whether the somewhat desultory and confused disorder, in which the factory had been plunged through some of the young socialistic workmen, was to be developed into a serious strike.

This expectancy gave the Obanger people that fatalistic and will-to-live mood which is felt on the eve of a battle. A little later the young factory girls also arrived. They came along arm-in-arm and giggling, as peasant girls walk through the village at evening, for they had retained this characteristic in their new occupation and abode.

Herr Oertchen had made special preparations for this evening by engaging Roggenzahn, the pianist from Dösswald, a dissipated and drunken creature, who, promptly at quarter to seven, began to play the "Wedding March" from the *Midsummer Night's Dream*. With closed eyes and the rapt expression of a virtuoso, he bent down over the keyboard of the little old piano and tried to veil

the wooden sound of its antiquated notes by an exaggerated use of the pedal.

In the meantime, the odd man of the inn had turned on the two arc-lamps in front of the entrance, and these lights immediately attracted some big fat moths, which had survived in the extraordinary warmth of this October night. Frau Oertchen, in the bar parlour, was regaling the two constables, who had come by train from Schaffenburg with orders to protect the restaurant. Two other policemen were patrolling the town—and two more were encircling the factory, where they had been seen and greeted without enthusiasm by the workers, for their presence in the town added vaguely to the prevailing tension.

The first disturbance was at the cash desk, even before the "Wedding March" had come to an end. The posters had announced clearly and in large letters "Adults only," but in spite of that and of the fact that "Putex" had forbidden, once and for all, the boys from the Gymnasium ever to attend the cinema, twenty or thirty of the boys appeared and demanded tickets. To attain their end, they had sent on in front their oldest members, confirmed failures in examinations, whose broken voices could declare roughly that they had long ago turned eighteen. The other boys, according to plan, stood together in small groups, in which the smaller boys, who were obviously under age, could remain hidden. They were all more or less intoxicated with excitement when they came on the scene, for they had gone through a series of excitements during the day and they had not quieted down since their secret meeting by the duck pond. The meeting had begun by deciding unanimously that they would entirely disregard the orders to stay behind after school; but afterwards they had split into two parties, one of which had simply voted to stay away quietly without saying



anything, while the other demanded a manly and open revolt against the tyranny of "Putex." A frightful scuffle had ensued at the end of which the "manly" party had won, with the result that in the afternoon Profet's elder son, Gürzle, the heftiest boy in the school, and "Putex's" own boarder, Kolk, had gone to see the Head Master and had informed him that his pupils refused to stay behind after school on this afternoon which had been previously fixed as a half-holiday for games. Whereupon they had resolutely departed from the Head Master's house, past the violated quince tree, leaving the worthy pedagogue speechless with horror.

Then they had marched out in open formation to Priel to Profet's villa to fetch Franz Albert, who had solemnly promised Profet's boys that he would watch their game of football. This he did, not without pleasure and fellow-feeling, for, actually, he was not much older than that big fellow Gürzle, and he felt at home as soon as his feet touched the short grass of the playground and the cinders of the running track. The game went splendidly, and after it none of the perspiring youngsters felt any inclination to go home, neither did Franz Albert. He played about with them until it grew dusk, he joined in a short hundred yards race and lost with the poor time of 11.7 seconds, because he was trained for endurance rather than speed, and his stay at Villa Profet had made him feel heavy and overfed. The boys greeted the triumph of their long-legged Gürzle (his time was 10.8 seconds) with frantic cheers, but they maintained a death-like silence when Franz Albert showed them some of his training exercises, and gave a demonstration of his left upper-cut, with which he had won the championship. They clearly felt the need to show their manliness and in front of the widow Seelig's stationery shop, in view of Leore Lania's photographs, they decided

to attend the cinema. They were bursting with the lust of battle when they reached Oertchen's hall, their thin ribs expanding like those of young animals, and their boyish bodies positively steaming. Heaven only knows where they had raked together the fifty-pfennig pieces, which they were clutching in their sweaty hands. But there they stood, ready to pay for their tickets, dash it all, and be admitted to the performance.

At first the crowd laughed at them, then came a little desultory skirmish and finally a real row. The workmen took sides—the young ones were for the boys, the old ones against—and just as young Oertchen was considering whether he should call the police, the boys began to use force. Those standing at the back kept pushing forward incessantly, those in front put up their fists, and one or two of them began to use their newly acquired boxing knowledge against young Oertchen. Suddenly they succeeded in breaking through, the cash table fell over, and the soup plate and the money rattled to the ground. The boys rushed through the confused crowd into the hall. They ran upstairs and took possession of the side seats in the small gallery.

And so it happened that all the better-class people—officials, merchants, and gentlemen of independent means—who arrived shortly before seven and took their seats to the strains of the "Blue Danube" waltz, saw their offspring looking down over the gallery railing with flushed faces. Seyfried, the butcher, for instance, whose ambition it was to give his son a better position in the world, shook his enormous fist at him, and Herr Profet, who had come to the cinema with his wife and the boxer, began to laugh furiously, when he saw, not only his elder son, Otto, but also his twelve-year-old Paul.

"These rascals," he said, "these little devils—they're just like I used to be myself!" His wife glanced at him

sideways, one of those married looks, which seem to say :  
“ Oh—you ! ”

Franz Albert sat between them, looking up at the boys, who were now his friends, with a smile on his cherubic countenance. The pianist was playing the Overture to *Poet and Peasant*, and the young man from the film hiring company, who turned up in Lohwinkel only occasionally, began to prepare his apparatus in the centre of the gallery at the back of the hall.

Suddenly there was a considerable stir, when Herr Oertchen in person conducted the mayor, Doctor Ohmann, and his wife and daughter to the centre of the gallery, where some upholstered chairs gave almost the appearance of a royal box. Frau Doktor Ohmann was a neatly-dressed elderly lady with a fondness for gossip ; she limped slightly, but did not allow anyone to notice it. At evening parties, which, in Lohwinkel, were usually confined to a limit of twelve guests, she expected to be asked to sing, for she was very musical and sang with great effect the “ Rose Aria ” from the *Marriage of Figaro*, Schumann’s “ Nussbaum ” and Hildach’s “ Lenz,” all of which appeared to her to be equally lovely. Her daughter, who was also very musical and played the violin, was engaged to that young doctor who frequently appeared as a cloud on the Persenthein horizon. Fräulein Ohmann had thin eyelashes, was unbecomingly dressed and wore that slightly hurt expression which is often worn by daughters of prepotent mothers.

Doctor Ohmann cast a quick look at the overcrowded gallery ; its timbers were creaking, in defiance of a notice, hanging by the entrance, which announced its maximum complement to be eighty persons. He suppressed a remark on the subject, smiled his polite official smile, and asked his wife :

“ What is the man below playing ? ”



The man was now playing the "Siegfried Idyll," playing it from memory, with a dreamy expression on his face, and with many improvised transitions.

"That is—Beethoven," the mayor's wife said decisively.

"Wagner," her daughter murmured. The mayor sat between two fires, as was usual in his domestic life.

It was now five minutes past seven, and the workmen, who had been waiting since half-past six for the performance to begin, began first to clap and then to stamp their feet. One of them shouted something unintelligible, then there was silence, then they began to stamp again, more in fun than in anger. The boys in the gallery, too, began to stamp and did so with such vigour that the mayor again cast an anxious glance at the overburdened wooden structure. He half rose to his feet, but then decided to ignore all violation of regulations for the evening. The waiter placed a glass of beer on top of the piano for Herr Roggenzahn, the pianist, and whispered something to him, whereupon he began to play something lively, which sounded like an overture to the performance, but still nothing happened.

The delay was caused by the fact that outside more and more people wanting to be admitted were pushing their way towards the entrance, despite the fact that all the seats were already sold out and the standing room along the walls was also crowded. Outside, in the passage, a desperate confusion prevailed, for everyone wanted to get in for the performance. The best seats, extending from the centre to the back of the hall, consisted of rows of chairs, and the odd man came and blocked up the last remaining gangways with iron seats which he had hauled along from the beer garden outside. The cheaper seats were long benches, without backs.

"Shove up a bit closer, all of you," Herr Oertchen said

in broad dialect to the people from Obanger, "and make a bit of room for other people."

This exhortation, although well-meant and delivered in conciliatory dialect, was not well received, and the cheaper seats met this trifling request with the most resolute refusal. Some of them got up and gesticulated, others grumbled, others shouted loudly, and others again began once more to stamp their feet. It led to a small revolt, which did not stop until Herr Oertchen had withdrawn; and even after silence was restored, and the pianist started to play the Barcarole from the *Tales of Hoffmann*, you could still hear Birkner, the foreman, saying:

"Why don't he tell the others to do it. . . ."

"What's the matter with the men?" the mayor's wife asked her husband, who was wrinkling his brows.

"They're only in fun," he said, and assumed his benevolent expression.

"Why, there's the doctor's wife right among the workmen," said the mayor's wife. "And without her husband. Is that Herr Karbon who is with her? Don't you think that's a little—how shall I say——?"

"There is Karbon. Hullo, Karbon!" Franz Albert shouted down. He got up and waved to Karbon. Franz Albert felt abysmally forsaken, alone, beside this vibrating and ominous Frau Profet. "Do come and sit with us, Karbon!"

Peter Karbon turned round, shrugged his shoulders and smiled gaily at the boxer. He happened to be sitting with Elisabeth in the cheaper seats, on the third row of benches from the front, and he was so tightly wedged in that he could not possibly have got out. He was blissfully happy, he had not taken part in such a crazy adventure as this for years. Elisabeth, by his side, was trembling a little, so lightly that he could just feel the warmth of her body against his shoulder.

Frau Persenthein was wearing the only good dress that she possessed, the dark blue one, but she had added a new lace collar and a pretty old cameo brooch, which she had inherited from her grandmother Burhenne. A hurried and not very successful attempt to manicure her nails had left some tiny marks of blood on the skin, which she touched from time to time with the tip of her tongue. Her whole being was in the throes of a bitter-sweet fever, for the impulse that had driven her to this cinema performance was nothing else but jealousy. She wanted to see for herself—that was it; an indescribable hunger tugged at her heart-strings to see this Leore Lania, to watch for hours, while Peter Karbon sat next to her and produced the illusion that she, Frau Doktor Elisabeth Persenthein, belonged to him and he to her.

A short talk on the forest path, when she had met him on the way to the Estate, had filled her with happy confusion and with cold fear.

“How is your friend?” she had asked.

“Thanks. Everything went smoothly.”

“Have the stitches been taken out?”

“The stitches—yes. I have separated from her.”

“You—but why—how——?”

“Because of you, of course, my dear.”

This answer had struck against Elisabeth’s heart like a red-hot bullet. It had taken her some time to absorb his answer, as they passed the white milestones by the road.

“Is it as simple as that for you to separate?” she had finally been forced to ask, and she had received the casual answer:

“Don’t let us generalise, Elisabeth.”

By the side of the road were wild buckwheat bushes with their tough stalks and greyish-pink blossoms.



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Elisabeth said nothing more as she played with these blossoms, while Peter Karbon slipped his arm under her elbow, as though it were the most natural thing in the world for a married woman to walk through the forest arm in arm with a stranger. And, indeed, Elisabeth too felt that it was the most natural thing in the world, even though, at the same time, she was harassed by the oppressive feeling of Unrighteousness and Sin.

One of the buckwheat blossoms was still in Karbon's buttonhole, smelling faintly of dust and meadow-land.

"They're going to begin at last," he said, forcing his hand under hers as the hall grew dark.

The film, which was now about to begin, was called, as already announced on the placards, *Adventure in Monte Carlo*, and, like all films which found their way to Lohwinkel, it was no longer quite new, and was somewhat scratched and worn-out. For this reason, the Côte d'Azur, which was the first scene, looked as though it were raining a little, although sunshine and black shadows were very clearly shown. To create the appropriate atmosphere of the Riviera, the spectators were shown in rapid succession the seacoast at Monte Carlo, the Casino, the gambling-rooms, a restaurant, a yacht in Villefranche harbour, rows of motor-cars on the Corniche road, luxurious shop windows in Nice—all so widely separated from life in Lohwinkel, that they were simply devoured by the hungry eyes of the spectators, including these workmen who were engaged in conducting wage disputes. Frau Profet, as one who had travelled widely, announced in a loud, hoarse whisper the names of places, hotels, and streets, which she recognised, into the ear of Franz Albert, who had himself been three times on the Riviera, but had already forgotten all about it.

You could send Franz Albert all round the world, and

he would notice no more of it than if he had been a postal package.

"I once had a fight in Spain," he announced *à propos de bottes*. "They treated me pretty badly, I can tell you. I hadn't Simotzky then."

At the side of the wall, in the thickest crowd of workmen, stood Herr Markus. He, too, knew the Riviera very well, though only from books, newspapers, novels and photographs. The young lady from the hairdresser's had joined him; it was a somewhat compromising and uncomfortable companionship, but it was at any rate better than nothing. He whispered to her explanations of the film, and with his thin shoulders he tried to keep the crowd of sweating workmen a little away from her.

Herr Markus had that morning fallen violently and deeply in love with Leore Lania—"You ought to have been a writer," she had said—and his feeling for her grew even more fervent and intense when her picture appeared on the screen. Apart from this, he still subconsciously harboured tender sentiments for Frau Doktor Persenthein. As she was sitting in the third row, her face received the full reflection of the lighted screen, and Markus, sensitive as he was, did not fail to notice the new and radiant expression on this face. For him, however, there was only the young lady from the hairdresser's; it was she, despised, vulgar and common, whom he would take home after the performance.

"*Faute de mieux*——" Herr Markus thought, and sighed. "My whole life is a *faute de mieux*," he went on thinking; and this seemed such an excellent phrase that it almost comforted him.

In the meantime, Leore Lania, the heroine, who was called "Lore" in the film, was going through the following experiences: She had arrived at the station in Monte Carlo, looking incredibly small and fragile and

helpless ; she had taken some letters from her bag, from which one gathered that she had come there to take up a post as a German governess. Though she was supposed to be as poor as a church mouse, she was wearing the most expensive costume from a tip-top dressmaker, as is customary on the films, and her every first gesture was of the most charming description. For, standing in front of the station buffet, she made it quite plain that she was very hungry, but, instead of purchasing a sandwich, she spent her last sous on a bunch of Parma violets. Then she was welcomed by a fat, bedizened madame, and the merry *quid pro quo* was in full swing. For Leore Lania, this simple, little German governess, had been the victim of a mistake, and had fallen into the clutches of a lady who managed a very elegant dancing establishment, where Leore was to appear as a star and put some "pep" into the business. The Lohwinklers did not all of them immediately understand this part of the plot. The bright boys from the Gymnasium, in the gallery, were the first to see the point ; then a little later the workmen, and then, finally, the better-class people. When all had grasped the situation, a broad and contented smile spread over their countenances.

The hall was indescribably hot and stuffy. From time to time Herr Roggenzahn wiped with a rag the keyboard, which was sticky with moisture. Once the overburdened timber of the gallery cracked so loudly that it sounded almost like a pistol shot, and the whole audience gave a frightened jump and looked round anxiously. Otherwise all was quiet and peaceful, although everyone felt his neighbours' elbows in his ribs, and the knees of the person behind in his back.

It was only when, in the second part of the film, Leore began trying on her dancing costume, that the young workmen began to shout rudely and without any apparent



reason. They did so partly from embarrassment, and partly, because as good Rheinländer, they found any "dressing-up" highly entertaining. A very piquant costume had been chosen for Lania, merely a few diamond-shaped pieces of black, between which her skin showed up in square ornamentation like a pattern of silk. The film producer had enhanced the silken impression of her skin by coaxing artful little reflexions from its smoothness. The curve of her shoulders was particularly shimmering, and held every eye.

Elisabeth Persenthein, who all her life had been dissatisfied with her own appearance, so like the dead marble Sigismunda, thought that she had never seen anything so fascinating as these shoulders.

Unconsciously she held Peter's hand quite tight, while she gazed at those wonderful, swaying, captivating shoulders. She suddenly understood that this strange mortal by her side had possessed and surrendered one of the most beautiful women in the world for the sake of her, Elisabeth Persenthein. For a moment she was overcome by a gentle, dreamlike dizziness; it was all so fantastic, so outside reality, as though in another sphere, on some far-distant planet. Above her Lania was dancing, quite alone, on an illuminated dance floor, full of a cool and detached allurements. Elisabeth looked away from the film; her jealousy had become a burning torment, almost erotic, for all real jealousy in its essence contains something of physical passion and grudging love for one's rival. Peter Karbon was gazing up at the screen; he was quiet and a little tired. He knew the film of old; he had never thought it particularly good, and now, in its scratched version, it was quite impossible. Elisabeth saw his mouth; for the first time she noticed the beautiful and firm modelling of his lips. The sight of them moved her so poignantly that she shivered.

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“What is it?” he asked.

“I don’t want you to look at the screen, dear,” she said violently. She said “dear” for the first time and she was quite unconscious that she had done so. Just then the third part of the picture came to an end, and the lights went up for a few minutes. This was because Herr Oertchen wanted to do business by selling beer during the interval. A bar had been erected under the gallery at the back of the hall, and the thirsty spectators began to crowd towards it at once. Everyone was so thirsty, that Hockling, the foreman, was to be seen shoulder to shoulder with the Notary drinking his beer, and the Manager of the Savings Bank did not consider it beneath his dignity to push a young workman aside and snatch from him his glass. Just as the interval came to an end, and Herr Roggenzahn was beginning to play an overture to the rest of the film, and the lights went out, two people came into the hall. One of them, who was as exhausted as a Marathon runner when he reached Oertchen’s Restaurant, was the Head Master Burhenne, “Putex” himself, who had heard in a roundabout way that his pupils had taken the law into their own hands and come to the cinema. He entered with an air of authority, as a man to whom most of the men in the district owed their education, and he had come resolved to put things thoroughly in order. He was followed by his excited and worried housekeeper, Frau Bartels, who was trying to soothe him. Before even entering the hall, “Putex” exchanged heated words with young Oertchen, and then with Herr Oertchen himself, and their loud voices could be heard inside the hall. The angry voices rose above the piano and interrupted that charming scene in which Lore fell in love with a young chauffeur. A few people hissed, others laughed, and then finally the door burst open, and

“Putex” almost fell into the room shouting in his deep headmaster’s voice :

“I forbid this ! I demand at once——”

But he was not given an opportunity of explaining what it was he was going to forbid. For though those of the audience who were parents were annoyed at their sons, and though many of the fathers present resolved to whack their young hopefuls after the performance, they were at the moment too engrossed in the film to welcome any interruption. After a certain amount of grumbling, hissing, and stamping of feet, Head Master Burhenne was finally reduced to silence. How that actually happened, never became known. Some people maintained that Seyfried, the butcher, had covered old “Putex’s” mouth with one huge hand, and threatened to hit him with the other. After this incident, however, the audience never really quietened down again, and this was partly due to the complicated plot shown on the screen.

As we have seen, Lore had fallen in love with a young chauffeur, who was employed by a fat and unattractive elderly gentleman. This elderly gentleman gave orders to be driven to the elegant dance club, in which Lore performed, and the young chauffeur had to wait outside the entrance while the elderly gentleman gazed at Lore and tried to seduce her. At this point another belated spectator entered the hall. It was Herr von Raitzold, who had walked over from the Estate, coughing and wheezing. He had made his way slowly through the darkening forest, clutching at tree trunks in his paroxysms of asthma. The air in the hall nearly choked him, and if, in spite of this, Herr von Raitzold remained for the performance, he did so for indefinable and desperate reasons. Perhaps it was merely because he was feeling so restless and miserable that he could not bear to stay at home at the Estate. Perhaps, too, he hoped to meet some influen-



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tial person at the cinema who might be persuaded to help him. His outward appearance did not betray his uneasiness, except by a pallor, which was not visible on the surface of his brown, rough countryman's skin, but was more deeply seated and contracted and drained his blood-vessels. Herr von Raitzold, as a matter of fact, merely gave one glance at the overcrowded hall, and then, panting for breath, went up the gallery, where he took his seat behind the mayor's daughter, with the matter-of-fact air of a gentleman born.

Just after he had sat down, a noise, the cause of which he did not immediately grasp, started down in the front rows of the hall. Apparently the workmen disagreed with the film producer as to the character of the elderly gentleman on the screen, whom the producer had consistently presented as a comic figure. He sat at a table, with a fat and self-satisfied expression on his face, and ate, while waiters came dashing in with course after course, the *Maitre d'Hotel* himself bringing in the champagne and pouring it out for him. The elderly gentleman meanwhile munched, swallowed and drank.

"Just like our old boss," someone in the front row said out loud. The remark sounded quite good-humoured and everyone laughed. "Our old boss" was Herr Profet's designation at the factory, and there was actually a very slight resemblance between him and the figure on the screen; due, perhaps, to the rolls of fat at the back of the neck or to the round seal-like head, or simply to the fact that they both looked well fed and sleek.

"He's fairly putting it down," another remarked quite openly. People farther back in the better seats began to make "hush" sounds.

"Well, the boss can, too," came from the front rows. One of the men whistled between his fingers. Herr

Roggenzahn, who, by this time, was a little drunk, looked at the audience understandingly and grinned. Suddenly at the side by the wall, where some of the young workmen were standing, a song was started :

“ Fizz for the Boss,  
'E don't care a toss  
For any chap's loss.”

Laughter. Uproar.

“ Silence, gentlemen, *please* ! ”

“ Order them to be quiet,” the mayor's wife commanded her husband ; but the mayor shook his head. Herr von Raitzold tried to pick out Herr Profet in the darkened hall below. Herr von Raitzold hated the workmen ; for him they were mere vulgarians, who deserted the land for higher wages in a factory, who let the land go to rack and ruin and went to rack and ruin themselves as a result. Now, however, he almost felt himself one of them, at least emotionally, although he did not admit this even to himself. Profet really behaved rather well during the uproar. True, he looked a little cowed by the demonstration, but he was clever enough to smile, almost approvingly, as much as to say :

“ Well, my good people, have your bit of fun ; it won't harm anyone. I am one of you myself.” His wife had clutched Franz Albert's arm imploringly, and the boxer sat there looking foolish and not knowing in the least what the noise was all about. He rarely went to the cinema, but now that he was there, he thought Lania looked splendid, far better than in real life, and he wanted to watch her in peace.

“ Shut up, you in the front rows,” he shouted out. He rose and involuntarily raised his fist, as though to administer one of his straight rights.

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He was answered by a terrific tumult. The crowd had recognised him as the fellow whom Müller, the chauffeur, had seen drinking champagne with the Profets, while he himself had to drive round the town with the dead body of Fobianke. Franz Albert ducked down again into his seat. He understood the feeling of the assembly, but he had no idea as to what these people had against him. He longed for his training quarters, for Simotzky and for his punch-ball. The film meanwhile went on despite all these disturbances. The fat woman had forced Lore to sit down by the side of the elderly gentleman, who, in turn, grew so enterprising in his advances, that it became quite obvious why the film had been banned for juveniles. The noise in the hall increased, the workmen's shouts grew louder, the good citizens protested volubly, chairs were pushed backwards and forwards, a bench was thrown over and some of the people in the audience were even preparing to leave. So Herr Oertchen, very tactfully, arranged another interval. The upflare of the lights and the inrush of the cool evening air through opened doors and windows produced a certain relief, and the waiter at the bar was kept very busy.

"Shall we go now?" asked Peter Karbon.

"Oh, no," Elisabeth answered. Go where? she was thinking numbly. She was afraid of her home, she was afraid of her husband, she was almost afraid of her child's eyes. She had left everything as it was this afternoon, she had handed over her home and her kitchen to the unreliable Lungaus, and had taken to flight. Now she did not know how to face her return. She only wished that the performance, confused and feverish as it was, would continue indefinitely, for her curiosity was excited by this woman on the screen and by the silent man by her side. Peter Karbon let go of her hand when the lights went up, but she grasped his again tightly, thinking that



no one would notice it. It was, however, noticed by the mayor's wife, the mayor's daughter, Fräulein Ritting, the seamstress from the Wassergasse, also by Lingel, a workman suffering from lead-poisoning, by the young lady from the hairdresser's, by Markus and last, but not least, by Behrendt, the chemist.

Herr von Raitzold, who had pulled himself together as soon as the lights went up, began a gallant conversation with the mayor's daughter.

"How do you like the play, young lady?" he asked; he used the word "play" in complete ignorance of the proper term for a cinema performance.

"Oh—rather boring. Nothing very edifying."

"May I ask after your fiancé?"

"Thanks. He is still in Wiesbaden, he has a practice there."

"I see, but isn't there a chance of getting him to Lohwinkel?"

"I should like it, of course; but he can't make up his mind. It's still undecided."

"I see," said Herr von Raitzold, and relapsed into his seat. He was thankful to breathe the fresh air coming in through an open window in the gallery, but his sensitive lungs suddenly detected in it a strangely bitter smell.

"Curious smell in the air," he said to the mayor, "that factory stinks out the whole district."

"That's not the factory smell," replied the mayor. He had been irritated all the time by the matter-of-fact way in which Herr von Raitzold had joined his party. "That smell might just as well come from your potato fields; you've been burning the tops for a week."

"That smell is not from potato tops," said Herr von Raitzold, emphatically. Then he was silent and went on inhaling the strange smell.

During this conversation in the exalted ranks of the

dress circle, there had occurred near the bar an incident which went almost unnoticed. Herr Oertchen, followed by Ellinger the postman, had stepped up to Birkner, the foreman, who was having a drink. Oertchen had touched him on the shoulder and said :

“ Birkner, here’s a telegram for you.” Birkner, who was not accustomed to receiving telegrams, wiped the sudden perspiration from his brow and stammered out :

“ That must be from Pank.” He stood there turning over the envelope in his hands for a while, before he could make up his mind to open it and discover the method by which this was done.

The telegram read : “ Strike discountenanced. Recommend peaceful negotiations. Assure you support trades unions.”

“ Blast ! ” was the next thing Birkner said—quite loudly, so that “ Putex,” who was standing nearby, with Herr Oertchen, discussing the removal of the Gymnasium boys from the hall, gave a jump at the word. The news that a decisive answer had arrived from Berlin spread rapidly through the hall, so that the workmen, who had been sitting in the front rows, pressed through the crowd towards their foreman at the back. Meanwhile, Herr Roggenzahn, with his music, gave the signal for the continuation of the performance, and so the gentry, who had been standing near the bar, began working their way towards the front of the hall to regain their seats. The two currents met in the centre of the hall with such a shock, that from the gallery, it looked almost like a free fight. The mayor, at any rate, had this impression. He arose and left the hall on tiptoe. Herr von Raitzold glanced at him questioningly.

“ I think something’s afoot. I’ll bring the police to the entrance in case of emergency,” the mayor murmured.



“ Shall I escort the ladies outside in the meantime ? ”  
Herr von Raitzold asked gallantly.

“ No, that would be too conspicuous,” the mayor answered, after a glance down into the hall, and left quickly and unobtrusively. Herr Profet, down below, had also been thinking the same, for he knew his workmen, and he had noticed the feverish and excited look on their faces as they crowded round Birkner.

“ Let’s go home,” he said, pushing his wife out of the row of seats. “ Perhaps Herr Albert will clear a way for us.”

Nothing was farther from the boxer’s mind than to use force. He only fought when he was paid for it. Like all true athletes, he was entirely good natured and unassuming. It was unthinkable for him to fight anyone without boxing gloves, to fight people who were not attacking him. He kept quiet behind Profet’s back, and thus they pushed their way past the knees of their neighbours to the blocked-up gangways at the side.

“ Can’t get out here,” said a young workman simply and pushed them back with his shoulder. Profet understood the threat implied in this little gesture, and with his wife and guest returned to the deserted seats at the back of the hall.

The hall was dark, but by no means quiet. Birkner had remained at the bar with a few of the workmen, and there they were now quarrelling, stubbornly and fanatically. They were divided in two sections, and they talked all the more loudly because they were incapable of finding the right words in which to express themselves. Herr Roggenzahn, who was peering into the hall with bleary eyes, suddenly had an infernal inspiration. Herr Roggenzahn had once been a really good musician, and in his time had been musical director at a small court opera. All the bitterness of his life’s failure suddenly surged up



in him. For a little while he had been letting himself go on Brahms' "Wiegenlied," as though to soothe the disappointed strike agitators. Suddenly this sounded to him meaningless and he plunged into a highly dramatic and very exciting piece of music. It was the March from Tschaikowsky's *Symphonie Pathétique*. The mayor's musical daughter recognised it instantly, so did Markus, who had recently heard it played on the wireless. In a perfectly devilish manner it forged storm and uproar in the hall; and it was entirely unsuited to the bidimensional representations which were proceeding on the screen.

Probably Frau Persenthein was the only person in the hall who was still following the film with any interest; but her interest grew more and more fervent and intense. Her heart began to beat, as Lania, sleek as a squirrel and full of allurements, gave a little dance in front of the fat gentleman. This dance was the chief attraction, the *clou* of the film, and the producer had shown, not only the dance, but also its effects. Men's faces, exposed naked in their lust, hands squeezed together under the table—just as Elisabeth's own hand at that moment squeezed Peter Karbon's—a young waiter, stopping still with his tray held high, and gazing open-mouthed at the dancer. Then a close-up of the fat gentleman with his eyes darting here and there to catch Leore's every movement. But then came another picture interposed—the young chauffeur waiting outside in the street with the car. He looked at his watch—it was late—he yawned, he walked up and down, he read a newspaper, he looked again at his watch. Again Leore was shown dancing, again the chauffeur was shown waiting outside; then came the dawn, it was freezing cold, the chauffeur put up his collar, dozed off at the wheel, started up out of his sleep, dozed again, started up again and again, he must not go to sleep—

“Fobianke,” someone suddenly shouted quite loud. It was one of those associations of ideas, quite unreasoned but illuminating as a flash of lightning, which are often had by madmen. The next moment the hall was dead silent, and then everyone seemed to begin shouting at once. Screams, whistles, laughter, hisses, and shouts for silence.

Then a dull roar : “Fobianke ! Fobianke ! Fobianke ! Fobianke !” The piano went on with its march, louder and louder ; it sounded like war, pestilence and revolution. The mayor jumped to his feet and shouted something unintelligible into the hall. The schoolboys screamed shrilly, beside themselves with joy. The two policemen pushed in from the passage and posted themselves by the door. Most of the Lohwinkel people got up to go. By the bar, glasses were broken, for they had come to blows. In front, benches fell crashing to the ground ; everyone was up in arms and each man felt that everyone else was his enemy. The operator stopped winding out the film, he had switched off his projector lamp in response to a sharp ring, which he had misinterpreted, so that his lamp went off before the lights in the hall went up. In darkness, save for the two red lights of the emergency exits, the hall was in turmoil, like a black, angry sea.

But long before it had come to this pass, Herr Markus with his extreme sensitiveness had laid his head to one side listening, as though he were hearing some vague sound in the distance beyond the uproar and the music, just as the asthmatic Herr von Raitzold had noticed the curious strange taste in the air which he laboriously inhaled.

“What’s the matter ? ” asked the young lady from the hairdresser’s.

“I hear something—a bell, fire-alarm,” Markus whispered. He was a passionately loyal member of the Loh-

winkel Volunteer Fire Brigade, although the Fire Brigade Committee did not credit him with courage because of his race.

“Rubbish,” the young lady said, and clung to him. But Markus went on listening and again he heard the bell; it grew louder, and came nearer. He followed the sound above the riotous pandemonium of the darkened hall, while his ribs were being buffeted by unintentional blows.


Suddenly the lights went up in the hall. In a moment everyone was silent. Then Müller, the chauffeur, pale, agitated and streaming with sweat, was seen leaning over the gallery railing, close by the mayor. Hoarsely the mayor shouted down:

“All men to the fire station. The factory is on fire!”

In the kitchen of the Angermann House was an ancient sink made of the red-spotted granite of the district. Frau Doktor Persenthein had piled up all the dishes in this sink without washing them, before she left the house to meet Peter Karbon on the Düsselwald Road. There was a slight leak in the tap, and the water dripped monotonously and dismally on to the unwashed plates and dishes of the disorganised Persenthein household. Doctor Persenthein, who had interrupted his surgery hours at five o'clock because he had been called to a maternity case in a poorer part of the town, and had returned at seven o'clock pretty much exhausted, stood awhile in the kitchen listening to the depressing sound of dripping water. He did not understand in the least what had happened.

True, he remembered vaguely that Elisabeth had told him something about her plans for the evening, but as he never listened properly to what she said, he did not know what could have happened to her. He roamed about the empty house; even Rehle's little room was deserted.





He went down to the basement and found the two bathrooms in incredible disorder, just as the patients had left them. Both baths were still full, one with the muggy remains of salt water, the other, a wooden one, with medicinal mud. The tiles were dripping wet ; so were the bath-towels, which were lying dirty on the floor.

As a rule the doctor did not see the rooms in his house until Elisabeth had done her work, so that he found this sight excessively depressing and cheerless. It did not occur to him that it was his wife's daily and hourly duty to remove these unpleasant details of daily life from his path ; but as he climbed the stairs, he had a momentary vision of Elisabeth's tired back, as seen at times, when she thought herself unobserved. At table, too, she often assumed an attitude which always got on his nerves ; she would hold her fork in her right hand and let her left hand drop under the table between her knees. It began to dawn on him that this ugly mannerism might be due to her being overtired, but this train of thought was interrupted and overcast by another, which related to the positive presence of streptococci in the system of one of his women patients. He stood in his surgery, tapping his fingers against the glass bowl of cotton wool, and meditated on a prescription of oil bandages round the joints. Then he turned to his note-book, and found a message stating that in spite of fever, the child of Keitler, the merchant, had not yet broken out in a rash. Underneath this message was another one : " I am going to the cinema. There's supper for you in the larder. Don't wait for me."

In the surgery, too, there was still some disorder, owing to the interruption of the consultations. In his irritation, the doctor flung a few probes and specula into the steriliser, and opened the window, to let out the stuffy atmosphere of his patients and to let in the darkening

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evening air. He felt excessively uncomfortable in this deserted house, but for the moment he had no wish to remedy this, and he remained irritably seated in front of his desk, first in the gathering dusk, and then in the bright circle of light from the lamp which he used for minor operations. Finally, he decided that his discomfort was simply due to hunger, but he waited for a few moments nevertheless, as though his dissatisfaction must be strong enough to bring home his wife. Then he made up his mind to go into the larder.

There he did, indeed, find a cold supper laid out on a tray, which with some trouble he managed to carry into the dining-room. Here, however, it appeared that the table had not been laid, so he placed the tray on the edge of the table and tried to remember where the knives and forks were kept. True, he had thoughtlessly watched his wife lay the table hundreds of times, but the object and purpose of her movements had never really penetrated his consciousness. The result was that he felt a stranger in his own house, and incapable of undertaking anything. He opened and closed a few drawers without success and then finally gave up the attempt. Besides, one of his cases suddenly came into his mind again : he remembered that he had forgotten to make an examination of a workman, called Haber, who had a duodenal ulcer. Again he walked up and down the room, made a note of this omission, took up a text-book on Internal Medicine, and read a passage on the inflammation of the gall-bladder. The passage held his attention and he did not put down the book until he heard steps in the hall. He dashed out, pleased that she had come home, but prepared to reproach her. However, he only encountered Lungaus, who was shuffling up the stairs in his best suit, talking to himself.

Lungaus was so absorbed in himself and his own hoarse whispers that he did not hear the doctor calling him ; he

continued to climb up the creaking wooden stairs to his room under the roof. When he reached the top, he switched off the light on the stairs, so that Doctor Persenthein remained standing in the dark. After a few moments' consideration the doctor decided to switch on the light and follow Lungaus.

When he entered Lungaus' room, he found that, although the light had not been turned on, it was filled with shimmering light because the moon was almost full. The moonlight was being absorbed by a thin bank of clouds in front, and the light was projected on all sides as though through a piece of faint blue gauze. Lungaus stood in the shadow by the window, a black shape magnified to ghostly proportions. Resting his hands on the window-sill, he was still indulging in a monologue.

"Have you been eating anything again?" asked Doctor Persenthein, who knew his man well.

"What does the doctor mean by that?" asked Lungaus, turning round slowly towards the door. Persenthein let the matter drop.

"Where is Rehle?" he asked next.

"Yes. Where *is* Rehle?" the workman replied irritably. "You ask *me* that. I've been fuming all day long at the way she pushes Rehle aside. As though I couldn't put Rehle to bed. Or as though Rehle couldn't undress herself. She's a smart child, far brighter than many grown-ups, is Rehle——"

"Yes, but where is she?" the doctor asked, a little surprised by the petulant tone of Lungaus' voice. True, this love for Rehle was the one soft spot in the debauched organism of this gloomy, rebellious ex-convict, Lungaus.

"Perhaps the poor child has gone to her grandfather's, the poor child. Where should she go when her mother goes out and leaves her?"

"Well, after all, I am at home. Why does the child



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march out of the house without asking ? ” Persenthein asked in vexation.

“ She’s annoyed with you, because you didn’t take her with you,” Lungaus informed him, obviously espousing the cause of Rehle.

“ My God, I can’t take her with me to maternity cases ! ” the doctor exclaimed. Lungaus shrugged his shoulders.

“ I’d like to have my supper, but I can’t find any plates,” the doctor continued.

Lungaus sat down on the side of his bed, but he kept an eye on the window and did not enter into any discussion of Persenthein’s domestic problems. Instead, he pursued his own thoughts.

“ It’s not right of her, I say, to make such a song and dance in front of the child. Three times she went into Rehle’s room, sobbing and crying, dragging the child about and kissing her as though she were mad, and saying ‘ Rehle, if mother leaves you, what will you do ? ’ And, ‘ Rehle, hold me close,’ and ‘ Rehle, put your arms round my neck,’ and ‘ Rehle, love me,’ and all that sort of thing. And Rehle, of course, being Rehle, was simply frightened to death. She’s just a hazelnut, I always say, hard to bite into, but the kernel is there, Herr Doktor, all the time. And Rehle comes to me and says, ‘ If mother wants to go away,’ Rehle says, ‘ she must go. I have Nick,’ she said, ‘ and you are here too, I’ll teach you how to cook, then we won’t need mother at all,’ that’s what the child said. ‘ And Erika is here too,’ she says—that’s the doll without a head, you know, Herr Doktor. So I said, ‘ You’re wise, Rehle, I say, always let people leave if they don’t want to stay.’ But it’s not right of her to tell the child about it. Let her go if she wants to, but she should leave the child in peace. A child like that knows quite well what’s going on here.”

Doctor Persenthein usually understood the discourses of his protégé pretty well, but this time he could not make head or tail of it. "What is it all about?" he asked impatiently. "Is it such an out-of-the-way thing for my wife to go to the cinema?"

"Yes, it is out-of-the-way," replied Lungaus, fingering the blanket on his bed. "Very much so. Altogether out-of-the-way," the expression seemed to please him, but he dropped it to return to his own line of thought. "One has no business to think that a child doesn't understand. When I was just six years old I found a fellow in bed with my mother, just six I was, just started going to school. I went into the room to get some coffee—we had a place by the oven where the coffee was kept—and this fellow was lying in bed with my mother. I've never got over that sight, I can tell the Herr Doktor that," he related in a trembling voice. The doctor listened uncomfortably.

"Come, Lungaus——" he replied, "now you can help me find some plates."

"They're in the second drawer of the side-board," Lungaus informed him, without any inclination to be useful. "There's sausage in the larder. She neglects you, too, of course. No bananas in the house, and no orange juice, and the milk turned sour. 'Eat a sausage sandwich,' she says to me, 'but don't tell the doctor.' Well, I ate a sausage sandwich, if she's going to neglect me that way and make me eat sausage sandwiches. But I don't need to tell you this, Herr Doktor, to-morrow, the blood test will show you anyway, that I've eaten a sausage sandwich, and the doctor's cures are really miracles, that I'll admit——"

"Have you eaten a sausage sandwich?" the doctor asked furiously. He knew that he was white with fury, for his ears always felt cold, when he was in a raging temper——

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"You'd be lucky if you had nothing else to worry about," Lungaus answered, and his words sounded like a mixture of crude mockery and real pity. The doctor came up to him and put his hand on his shoulder.

"Tell me, are you drunk again, too?" he asked threateningly, realising with surprise that Lungaus' hard, thin shoulders were trembling.

"Oh, no," Lungaus replied quietly.

The light had not yet been switched on in the attic, which was filled with cloudy moonlight. The moon also silhouetted the outlines of the factory chimney, and the rest of Profet's buildings. During their entire conversation, Lungaus had kept his gaze fixed on the slanting attic window. Now, suddenly, he turned his head towards Doctor Persenthein.

"Always let 'em go," he said mysteriously. "When they've reached that point, no one can keep 'em. Aye, always let 'em go, Herr Doktor. If I were the Herr Doktor, I'd kick her out and have done with it. It's not right for a man to sit and wait until she's ready to leave with the other fellow. I was married once too. Don't think it'll relieve you to break the other chap's bones. Chuck her out, and be done with it, *I say.*"

"What on earth are you talking about?" the doctor asked, somewhat impressed by Lungaus' manner, by the trembling of his thin starved body, by a dumb expression of understanding and fellowship, which was new in the man.

"About our mother, of course," Lungaus answered, staring at him. "About our mother deceiving us with that fellow."

The doctor dropped his hand, as though it had been scorched, while Lungaus smiled the worldly-wise smile of an old tippler. "The one concerned is always the most surprised," he remarked.



“You are mad,” the doctor said. He had already reached the door. “If I discover that you’ve been boozing again, I’ll throw you out.”

“To-day, I’ve not been boozing, not to-day,” Lungaus said, looking out of the window. There was a sort of veil over the factory buildings, a suggestion of light on the horizon, by the vineyards which sloped down near the factory wall towards the railway station.

“Run over to Herr Direktor Burhenne’s and fetch Rehle home,” said the doctor; he missed the child sorely.

“Sorry, can’t oblige,” Lungaus said, and went to the window.

“What do you mean?”

“Because of my alibi, Herr Doktor. If one hasn’t an alibi, one’s got to be careful. Who knows what’s going on to-night here in the town and in Obanger, there are all kinds of rumours afloat, and no one knows what may happen, and afterwards the man who hasn’t an alibi is proved guilty. If Lungaus is seen in the street, anyone can step up and say that Lungaus did it, but if Lungaus has spent the whole evening in his room, no one can dispute his alibi.”

The doctor did not listen to the end of this mad explanation; he closed the door with a bang and went back to the living-room. As he left the dark attic, he felt a curious dizziness and numbness, a strange sensation, as though the last few minutes had occurred somewhere outside Time. “That idiot could talk one stupid,” he thought. His hunger had passed off so completely, that he pushed the tray on the table aside with disgust, and then picked it up and carried it back to the larder. By his very accurate watch it was now nearly eight o’clock, while the church clock struck the three-quarters, for this clock lost a little each day and was not set except on

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Saturdays, so that the Lohwinkel people were accustomed to make allowance for this slight inaccuracy. Immediately afterwards there was a ring at the bell downstairs: short—long—short. This was Rehle's signal, and the doctor ran down to the door, much relieved. It was indeed Rehle standing outside, small, but stretched to her full height and wearing her party dress.

"Here I am, Nick," she announced, beaming with such self-satisfaction that the doctor immediately gave up the idea of reproaching her.

"Where on earth have you been, pet?" was all he asked.

"At grandfather's. The boys made him terribly angry, so I went to comfort him," said this optimistic little person.

"How did you comfort him?" the doctor asked, and he himself felt much happier as he held the little hand and went into the living-room.

"Oh, with sugar and lemon juice."

"I see," the doctor said, feeling hungry again. He wandered back into the larder to fetch the tray. Rehle trotted along beside him.

"What a beastly mess!" Rehle said, looking at the dripping sink and assuming her mother's housewifely expression.

"Do you know where the plates are kept?" her father asked hopefully.

"Of course," she answered. She liked grown-up expressions, but her language had not entirely outgrown her babyhood. She assumed a very important manner, as she helped her father to lay the table. Then she climbed up on to a chair and sat opposite him.

"You ought to have been in bed ages ago," the doctor said, glancing at the excited little face.

"I wanted to sleep at grandfather's, but they went to the cinema."

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"What, they too? Are they all mad on the cinema?"

"Yes," Rehle said nodding.

"Tell me, Rehle, what did mother say to you before she went to the cinema?" the doctor asked attentively.

"I don't remember."

"Well, try to remember, my pet."

"Well, only—whether I would not be ill. No, I won't be ill. Oh, and I was to be a good girl when mother went away on a journey. Of course I'll be a good girl. She doesn't need to tell me that."

"Journey—is mother going away on a journey?" the doctor asked. His hands fell flat on the table before him.

"I'm not going to wash to-night. I'll only brush my teeth," Rehle announced.

"Yes, yes," the doctor said, not really hearing what she said. Though Rehle was still just a tiny child, she had learnt the trick of cheering her father up by asking him professional questions. "Has the little new baby come into the world?" she asked him now.

"What? Yes—it arrived."

"Did the woman scream very loudly?"

"Well—not so very," the doctor said, stroking the smooth little head of his tiny comrade. "Now you must go to bed, and I must work," he said, and pushed her gently away. "I must think things over. I must think things over."

But, even after Rehle had left, he did not succeed in concentrating his thoughts. He lit a cigar and went down to his room. There he began to busy himself with a great many unimportant details, as though to escape from the main issue. He took slips of paper from his box of case-notes and put them back again; he rearranged the scalpels in his case of instruments, he screwed the operating chair up higher, and then down lower. He felt



Hawthorne  
writing

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harassed and helpless in this empty house which responded to his doubts and questions with an almost malicious silence. "I'll work until Elisabeth comes home and then I'll ask her what's the matter," he thought, and the thought of her frank, open face soothed him. But as he took the manuscript, on which he was working, out of the drawer and absent-mindedly underlined in red ink the title (*The biological principle of alteration in the human system and its response to dietetic treatment*) he realised that Elisabeth for some days had seemed different, rather feverish and moody. It might not necessarily be only her lungs, although there was some danger in that quarter of the tall, thin body which had not perhaps inherited a thoroughly sound constitution. "She has a high temperature," he thought, "and a high temperature can be due to psychic causes."

At the same moment, however, there came upon him such a stark, brutal thought that his lips, his ears, his hands, his whole body went cold. "I'll kill that fellow, kill him, if he tries——" he thought. Never in his life had he felt anything so strongly as this lust to murder, which, aimless and unconfined, was soon swept away into the void. As it passed off, the exhausted Persenthein smiled, and wiped tiny beads of perspiration from the bridge of his nose. "I'm going mad," he said half aloud to himself. The silent house continued to surround him mysteriously with mute threats. "Work," Doctor Persenthein commanded himself. It was not easy at first, but after a time he succeeded. He barely heard the patter of little feet at the door, when Rehle appeared, quite naked.

"The post, Nick," she said, and put a packet on his desk. It was one of her duties to empty the post-box and she had got out of bed and come down again especially to attend to this forgotten business.

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"Mother isn't really going away on a journey, is she, Rehle?" he asked imploringly.

"Yes, she is," Rehle answered.

The doctor picked her up quickly and put her on his lap. He did not know what to do, and he sought for protection in her warm, childish body. Rehle snuggled down, and lay quite still, a small, breathing, listening little creature.

"Fire alarm," she said, just as he thought that she had gone to sleep. The doctor's thoughts had been wandering. They had wandered from the over-excited Elisabeth of the last few days to the quiet Elisabeth with the smiling face whom he had known for seven years of happy married life—and further back still to their engagement, to the hospital at Schaffenburg, when he had been a young assistant physician, and she a nurse in blue and white uniform (he remembered distinctly a serious case of eclampsia which he had just been attending, when he met Elisabeth for the first time in the corridor of the Out Patients' department). Now Rehle's words recalled him to the present. He heard running footsteps below in the street, echoing under the arches of the Angermann Tower, then growing fainter—and then more running footsteps.

"What has happened?" he called down.

"The factory is on fire!" was the answer.

He heard the siren from the fire station more distinctly. The doctor felt strangely relieved by this signal and the growing disturbance in the street, as though his own personal tension and excitement were being merged and dissolved in the general excitement. He ran up the stairs, with Rehle in his arms. From the bedroom there was a view of Obanger. The factory chimney stood out black against the red, it was the light, greyish-red of a roof fire, and the sky had become like a yellow dome. From the distance the fire looked curiously compact and

immovable, more like lava than like flames, because the clouds of smoke which rose above it were so thick.

"Are we going there on the motor-cycle, Nick?" Rehle asked. She was dead sleepy, but full of excitement and love of adventure.

"No, I must stay here, so that they'll know where to find me in case anyone gets hurt," he answered in a strained voice. He would have been happier to know that Elisabeth was at home instead of in the endangered suburb. He held Rehle close, as she huddled, naked, on the window-sill, gazing at the fire in the distance, as though it were a Christmas tree lit up especially in her honour.

"Wonderful— isn't it, Nick?" she murmured once, rubbing her nose against his, which, in their private language, they called a nigger kiss.

"If only mother had come home," he answered earnestly. Rehle kept silent, and, in a little while, her eyelashes sank slowly down over her eyes. This time she really went to sleep. The doctor felt the child in his arms grow heavier. He picked her up and carried her to her cot. Erika was already asleep, bandaged up tight like a mummy. Just as he was putting Rehle down on her pillow, she murmured something.

"You can leave the door open, if you are afraid of sleeping alone," she murmured to her father in the comforting tone which she usually adopted towards grown-ups.

"Yes, yes, all right, my pet," he said smiling, and held her little hand fast until it fell from him heavy with sleep. "Thank you," he added as an afterthought.

It was now past nine o'clock and the factory was still on fire. In fact the fire was higher than ever, and people tramped below under the Angermann Tower on their way out to Obanger. Cyclists, like glow-worms, flitted through the streets, just as a week before at the time of the accident.



“ We’ll never shake off this unrest,” the doctor thought, and now the word “ unrest ” had a new and far-reaching implication. “ I must work,” he thought, and in this thought was a selfish desire to escape from the world and to prevent this unrest from penetrating into his holy of holies, the realm of his Idea.

As Doctor Persenthein reseated himself at his desk and looked through the pile of minute dietetic records he had made in three years of experiments, including hundreds of notes on Lungaus’ case, a sudden illumination flashed across his mind. He remembered the man’s half-mad, distracted manner, the strange way his shoulders had trembled as he stood at the window in his room looking towards Obanger. “ But, of course, that fellow started the fire ! ” he thought. “ They’ll put him in prison. They’ll take him away from me and feed him on prison food. Then you’ll be done for, Nick, done for ! ” he told himself out loud. He jumped up and paced round the operating chair. This was such a serious anxiety that it turned his thoughts from the worry about his wife. If Lungaus had started the fire—and even if he had not started the fire—if he were only suspected, if he were merely kept in remand for four or six weeks——

Persenthein stood facing this fear, in the centre of the room, as though he were up against a thick wall. Down below, outside the window, the nocturnal tramping and shuffling of feet continued, and the echo of voices from the stone walls. By now some people were returning from the fire. Elisabeth, thought the doctor each time he heard a step, but Elisabeth did not come. He went to the window and closed it so forcibly that the old copy of Aristotle, which always lay on the window-seat, fell to the ground, half open, showing its yellowed pages and close print.

*Harmonia*—nice sort of harmony, Persenthein thought,


and felt like kicking the book. He went to the window again and closed the wooden shutters as well. It was a renunciation of the disturbed world outside. "You stay out there," it seemed to say.

He returned to his notes, but he could not concentrate his thoughts, however hard he tried. Shall I go to bed? he asked himself, but he shook his head. He realised with surprise that he could not possibly think of going to sleep until Elisabeth came home and with her clear presence cleared up all that was now obscure. Finally, after pacing round the operating chair many times, and smoking innumerable cigarettes, he stopped in front of the little pile of post which Rehle had brought in. The slow church clock had struck eleven, when the doctor opened the last issue of the *Munich Medical Journal*. He glanced at the index and his eyes were suddenly riveted by a title.

"*Experimental Alteration of the Human Constitution produced by Change of Diet and Mode of Life*" was the title of the article. As Doctor Persenthein turned over the pages to find this article, his heart seemed to stop beating. It took him some time to find the place, and, when he finally began to read, his heavy shoulders sank forward and his eyelids reddened.

The article, like most articles of its kind, was the report of a lecture delivered by some physician or other at a medical conference—Persenthein turned back twice to memorise the man's name. His name was Wolland, and he was physician in charge of the municipal hospital at Essen on the Ruhr, where, no doubt, a great deal of human material was available for experiments—and this man claimed nothing less than that he had succeeded in fundamentally altering the predisposition of certain patients by means of a special mode of life, a strictly maintained diet and a gradually progressive exposure of threatened





organisms. Not only did he claim this and prove it pretty clearly, but he did not even appear to attach very much importance to it, and made it plain that his own experiments were based on the well-known work of Krokus in Oslo and Professor Williams of the Mayo Institute in Boston. He finally referred to an entire school of medicine, centred in the University of Freiburg, which had been pursuing similar methods, both in theory and practice, for many years. Wolland then modestly mentioned that his experiments had been conducted only on a hundred and sixty-seven patients, so that his results were but a small, though promising, beginning for this line of research.

No catastrophe could have occurred more quietly than this, which now overwhelmed Doctor Persenthein, as he read the report. He read it again and yet again, and compared the general outline of its therapeutic method with his own notes. Some of the details of the work done by this Wolland in Essen on the Ruhr differed from his own, but the Idea was the same. It was Persenthein's Idea and it was Wolland's Idea ; it was also the Idea of Doctor Krokus in Oslo and Doctor Williams in America, as well as being the Idea of the Freiburg School. It was, in fact, Nobody's Idea, but the Idea of All, one of those ideas which are in the air and are picked up here, there and everywhere.

The church clock struck midnight, one o'clock, two o'clock, and still Elisabeth did not come home. True, this fact had sunk deep down into Doctor Persenthein's consciousness, but subconsciously he was aware of it as a dark and menacing danger and a warning. He sat there, utterly lonely, in the silent Angermann House, through the night, while the wooden beams creaked, and the mortar trickled down.

He had the empty satisfaction of knowing that his



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methods had been right and his idea practicable, and there was a vague comfort in the feeling of comradeship with these other men who were working on the same lines. But this was not much comfort for a man so devoured by ambition as this little country doctor in Lohwinkel. Poor as Job, he sat there contemplating the fruitless work of many years with Lungaus, his one and only case which he had studied and recorded, one among thousands of possible victims. Doctor Wolland in Essen on the Ruhr had experimented on one hundred and sixty-seven cases, and he had called this "a small number of cases, which could not prove very much."

During the war, Doctor Persenthein had known a man who had lost five sons at the front, one after the other. Now, as the night passed, this loss of children seemed to him a simple grief, easy to endure. He sat there all night, between his own *Biological Principle of Alteration in the Human System and its Response to Dietetic Treatment*, and the *Experimental Alteration of the Human Constitution produced by Change of Diet and Mode of Life*, by Doctor Wolland of Essen. And before him was a complete void, as though he had gone blind.

A stubborn, eccentric character, this Doctor Persenthein. A man of thought, a German through and through, and at the same time a man forced, in loneliness and solitude, to bury all that life meant for him. . . .

Thousands of times Fräulein von Raitzold had seen her brother put his old army revolver in his pocket before he left the house. But on this particular evening, it was as though she did not see him do it until some time after he had left, and now, when she called to mind how he had picked up the revolver, there seemed to be something unusual in this action—a danger, a threat, a secret. The fact that she was thus agitated by an act of daily occurrence

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was simply due to the excitement, disintegration and general feverishness, which had seized upon Lohwinkel more and more since the accident on the Dösswald Road, when the people from the big city had broken into the closed circle of the little town.

The Estate was unusually quiet that evening, for many of the servants had gone off to the cinema, and only old Kilker, who acted as a sort of foreman or bailiff, had joined the old dairymaid, Genofefa, in the cattle shed to see to the cow, which was about to calve for the first time. Upstairs, in the so-called drawing-room, Lania still went on playing her fox-trot. She began it over and over again, thirty or forty times, a completely mad and heartrending performance. Fräulein von Raitzold made her way up the stairs, knocked, and opened carefully the door to the room, with its three windows, its ugly worn yellow carpet and its gas chandelier covered with gauze. The actress did not notice that Fräulein von Raitzold had come in. She sat in front of the old walnut piano, her chin lifted, with an absent-minded expression on her face, looking excessively fragile and unprotected. She seemed to have surrounded herself with such an impenetrable void that Fräulein von Raitzold closed the door again silently. Outside she put on her boots, which she had taken off before entering the room, and disappeared.

Shortly after half-past eight—the veterinary surgeon had just come, and had gone with Fräulein von Raitzold to the cow—the telephone rang. A hurried voice announced that the factory was on fire, and asked for horses to be sent over, for the Estate was obliged to furnish horses for the old fire engine, which was still used to supplement the new motor fire engine. The good lady was terribly frightened, for she felt that there was some connection between this fire and her brother's moody manner. She ran quickly to the yard in search of

the stable boy. He had climbed up on the railing by the gateway and was now staring into the night. True, he could not see the factory from the Estate, but behind the blacker outline of the forest, the sky showed a red light. A thousand crickets were chirping in the vegetable garden, and this gave a strange feeling of peace and detachment. Fräulein von Raitzold hurried the boy off to the town with the horses. The animals were tired and unwilling, they were used for all kinds of work and had lost their stamina. Ten minutes later Fräulein von Raitzold could not bear it on the Estate any longer; the crickets were still chirping, the cow had begun to moan and, in the drawing-room, Lania was still playing her desperate fox-trot. Fräulein von Raitzold dragged the old bicycle out of the shed, drew on her leather gloves and started for Obanger.

The fire had begun in the second and third sheds, the same buildings in which, in the morning, the electric light had not functioned and where, presumably, a short circuit had occurred. The night watchman had not noticed anything until the thick smoke had found an outlet and shot out a thin flame from the roof of shed number two. He and Müller, the chauffeur, had tried at first to put out the fire with the hand extinguishers, but without success. The Dösswald Fire Brigade arrived before the one from Lohwinkel. This delay was due to the cinema performance at Oertchen's Restaurant, which had broken up in tumult without the spectators knowing what had happened further to the chief characters in the film. For the first twenty minutes the efforts to extinguish the fire were rather disorganised, and the fire had made its way through the burning timber of the roof to the annexe where the chauffeur lived. Then Vögele, the saddler, who was also head of the fire brigade, ordered the hose to be concentrated on Müller's home, and heroic



volunteers dragged into safety the chauffeur's household goods : some shell ornaments, a kitchen dresser, a framed picture of August Bebel, and a Madonna painted on blue porcelain with a background of stars. In the burning shed, meanwhile, huge compact masses of black-red smoke had formed ; for the lack of windows and the poor ventilation of the building made it impossible for the smoke to escape, and the firemen could not penetrate into the building. Meanwhile, the fire was eating its way upwards to the other roofs, and shooting up to the sky with giant arms.

On the black skeletons of the buildings stood men with black faces, with hose-pipes in their hands. Below they were knocking holes into the walls. Often a piece of burning timber fell heavily to the ground. The Lohwinkel people stood outside the factory yard, near the wall, with the glow of the fire reflected on their tense faces ; they felt the curious satisfaction and primitive exultation of watching a fire. It was really a fire on rather a large scale ; at any rate, a spectacle that might not occur again for another ten years.

" The garage ! The petrol ! " yelled one of the black faces. The man ran across the courtyard, with the upper part of his body bent almost double in his eagerness to help. It was Birkner, the socialistic head of the works council, the leader of the strike faction, yet a clear-headed and courageous man, ready to lend a hand fearlessly. He ordered the factory fire brigade, as well as the men from Düsselwald, immediately to put the petrol in a safe place. The roof of the garage, which had got very hot, was sprayed with water ; the sheds were beyond saving. They collapsed in a burning mass, beam after beam ; it looked as though the black wood was melting in the yellow flames with their flickering blue edges. Although the fire spurted and crackled on all sides, the general impres-

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sion was of a strange and weird noiselessness. This was because of the continuous and monotonous hissing of the flames above all casual sounds, to the silence of the firemen and the stillness of the spectators. It was curious to see the bats. Usually they hung in hundreds to the roof-beams of the two sheds, digging their tiny claws into the wood and looking like sleepy mice. Instinct warned them to leave the threatened buildings in time, but now, in the illumined darkness, they were helpless, and again and again their jagged wings fluttered softly past the staring faces of the people from Lohwinkel.

The crowd felt a little malicious satisfaction at the discomfiture of Herr Profet. But, good heavens, there was no real cause for exultation at his expense, for, of course, he was insured and most probably, like the good business man he was, he would emerge from the catastrophe with some advantage. He would build new workrooms in place of the old ones—light, hygienic premises, of which the cost would be defrayed not by him but by the insurance company. Business in the factory would, of course, be interrupted for a time, but it was not impossible that the workers themselves would have to bear the brunt of this. The older workmen, those who were timid and anxious about their jobs, were already standing about in small groups murmuring about reduction of staff and temporary stoppage of work. But even the hot-heads forgot about their strike plans while the fire was in progress; they formed a ring round the main building, sweating in their efforts to protect the precious foundry, in which two shifts of twenty-five men found employment and their daily bread.

Herr Profet himself was behaving rather well. In the first place, as a simple volunteer in the fire brigade he was performing his duty by taking turns with Herr Markus in pumping water into the antiquated fire hose with all

his might, and this was no light task for a corpulent man. Also, he did not lose either his head or his good humour; he even made a few jokes in the midst of this crashing, smoking and burning misfortune. He promised an endowment for the fire brigade, he praised the workmen, called for free beer, and arranged the relays. All in all, he was a diminutive Napoleon, a man of small beginnings and great successes. A night like this showed up the versatile, sturdy efficiency of his character and made it clear why it was he who had succeeded, and not Herr von Raitzold—to take an example from the same district.

Herr von Raitzold stood amongst the other Lohwinklers and watched the fire. He was slightly depressed by the thought that, by so doing, he was showing Herr Profet too much attention. The fire, however, attracted him so much, the crashing and crackling of the buildings coincided so closely with his own mood, that he could not tear himself away. In common with everyone else, he too grew hoarse from the smoky air. His eyes began to smart and water, and his skin was covered with a thin layer of soot, but he continued to watch the fire, quite fascinated. As the fire began to collapse and diminish, the crowd too began to disperse, and the landowner slowly moved forward from the fourth row to the first. He shared the disappointment of the crowd when the fire was extinguished in three hours' time and only thin light clouds of smoke continued to pour out of the charred roofs. After the fire the factory courtyard felt chilly, perhaps because a slight breeze had sprung up—thank heavens that it did not come before—and suddenly it grew much colder, a real October night, with a moon swallowing up the clouds round it, and this further increased the feeling of silvery chilliness.

Herr von Raitzold remained standing there, when everyone else had gone, and after a fire guard had been



stationed at the various factory buildings and the fire brigade was ready to leave. He stood there, with his faded cavalry officer's moustache twitching up and down as though he were talking to himself. His sister, who had been looking for him with an ever-increasing anxiety all the time the fire had been in progress, found him only now and came up to him. The Estate horses, in front of the fire engine, turned their heads towards her as she passed, and she stopped by them for a moment, examined the lie of the heavy harness they were wearing and patted their necks. Herr Profet, collarless, dripping with perspiration and black as he was, accorded her a ceremonious bow. He was just conducting the mayor to his car, which was standing at the side of the road.

"Well, it might have been worse," Doctor Ohmann said.

"Yes, it might have been worse. At least no one was hurt."

"Of course, you're insured?"

"Yes, but it will take a law-suit to squeeze the money out of the insurance company."

"Have you any idea how the fire started? I mean—any suspicion—there has been a certain amount of unrest at your factory."

"What do you mean by suspicion, Herr Bürgermeister? My people were egged on from outside, that is all. I should have to suspect all or none. Something was wrong in the electric wiring—I thought this morning that it might be a case of sabotage. Lungaus, one of the men—with a very bad reputation—is said to have been seen sneaking about—but where I can't prove anything, I refuse to suspect. And then again, why should the fellows saw off the branch on which they sit? They're only too glad that the factory exists. You'll see what a row they'll make when I have to cut down work for a month."

“Will you. . . ?” the mayor asked in alarm.

“I’ll see,” Herr Profet answered. “If I can possibly avoid it——”

“May I give you a lift? I presume your car is still out of order?” the mayor asked when they reached his car.

“No thanks, I’d like to stay here till to-morrow morning. But perhaps you would be so kind as to take Frau Müller, my chauffeur’s wife. She had a terrible fright, poor woman. She must spend the night at my villa. They dragged her beds out into the yard.”

No, he was not the worst man in the district, this Profet; there were worse employers, and harder conditions than those in his factory. Take the woollen manufactory in Dösswald, for example, or the machinery works in Schaffenburg. On their way home, his workmen, tired and exhausted after the fire, talked of this. Their heated anger had vanished, as though the fire had burnt it away into thin air. The wind changed, it was a clear, cold night, and that fellow Pank, from Berlin, had only jawed a lot and done nothing. . . .

“Fichli,” said Fräulein von Raitzold, coming over to her brother from behind, and touching his elbow. “Fichli, everyone has gone. I have brought your bicycle, in case you want to ride home; I can come on later with the lads when they bring the horses back from the fire station.”

His sister’s soothing voice startled the landowner as though he had been struck. “I? No, I must first have a word or two with this Profet,” he answered, coughing.

“What, now? It’s past midnight—and the man is tired and anxious.”

“I am too,” said Herr von Raitzold stubbornly.

“Must it be to-day?”

“If it isn’t to-day, it will be never,” he said emphatically. The day with its anxiety, the feverish evening at the

cinema ; the fire ; the long hours staring at the burning buildings, as in a trance ; the smoke and the flames, had driven the landowner to the point at which he now was. "No—don't wait—go home," he said roughly, and withdrew his arm from his sister's soothing grasp. As they talked, they had returned to the shadow under the factory wall, so that Herr Profet, who came back to his post, did not see them. The moon lighted up his face clearly, two white arc-lamps were burning, one at the gate and one at the main building, and small lanterns, belonging to the men guarding the buildings, flitted in and out between the black skeletons of the sheds. Herr Profet, who so far had kept his courage up, now looked like a beaten man, as he crossed the yard, with its cold and bitter smell of fire, and walked towards his office.

Herr von Raitzold left his sister standing there in the shadow of the wall. He ran after the factory owner, and burst on him like a shot from a gun.

"Herr Profet—I must speak to you for a moment," he gasped, breathless.

Profet gave a jump and repressed an impulse more like fear than surprise. Twice he was on the point of refusing, but he was finally compelled by something in Raitzold's face. "If you please——" he said, letting the landowner walk up the steps to the office ahead of him. Inside, Müller, the chauffeur, had tried to make the room as comfortable as possible. The desk lamp was lit ; a bottle of brandy stood in readiness ; a motor rug lay on the leather sofa. True, several window-panes had been cracked by the fire and the night air drifted unpleasantly through the room. Herr Profet, in his sweat-soaked clothes, shivered with cold.

"A glass of brandy, Herr von Raitzold ?"

"No, thanks. On no account."

"Well—I must have one in any case," Herr Profet said,



placing the bottle to his mouth without further ado. "Stay in the waiting-room, Müller," he added, and offered Raitzold one of the two easy chairs. Raitzold, however, remained standing stiffly in the centre of the room. He felt clearly that if he relaxed at all he would go completely to pieces. He stared blindly at the walls, which were tastefully decorated, with photographs showing Profet's humble beginnings—Profet's parents, Profet as a ridiculously dressed communicant with a candle in his hand, Profet as an apprentice, grouped with other apprentices round a barrel of beer, Profet as a member of the workers' cyclist club "The Happy Rovers."

"Well?" Profet asked.

"To-day I received an official intimation that you——" Herr von Raitzold began, but he realised at once that conventional phrases would lead him nowhere, so he stopped. "I merely wanted to tell you that it is impossible," he said chokingly.

"One can't discuss a business matter that way, Herr von Raitzold," Herr Profet said, not unkindly. He was dead tired, and his essential good nature came to the surface in this state of exhaustion, as it does with men who are slightly drunk.

"For you it's a matter of business, for me it is not a matter of business. I am not a business man. Business indeed!" exclaimed the landowner.

Profet looked at him attentively.

"Whether it is good business for me is a question. You know better than I do that the two hundred and fifty thousand marks it's costing me to take over your Estate won't be all I'll have to spend on it. If I don't spend another hundred, or hundred and fifty thousand, I might as well not take over this neglected land at all."

When Herr von Raitzold heard his Estate called

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“neglected land,” he again felt that cold contraction of his blood vessels which produced pallor—all the more, because Herr Profet spoke the truth. “Then I don’t see—if—then—why do you hound me off my Estate?” he asked. He meant his words to be reproachful, but they sounded more like a whine. “You have been persecuting me—for years,” he said, biting his moustache which had begun to tremble.

“Earlier on I made you one or two very decent offers.”

“Yes. You, of course, are one of those people who think that anything can be bought for money.”

“Yes, and so it can,” thought Herr Profet, but he did not say this aloud. “Let’s leave things as they are,” he said, sitting down heavily and leaving Herr von Raitzold to stand in the middle of the room. “Enmity is enmity. You have harmed me in the district where you could, and I shall harm you, too, if I can.”

At this the landowner crumpled up slightly, and the manufacturer watched him closely. Actually Herr von Raitzold was pretty near the truth when he spoke of persecution. Profet had often imagined to himself and boasted to his wife and friends how it would be when these Raitzolds had been ruined and he, Profet, became undisputed Lord of Lohwinkel. Unfortunately he was now so exhausted that his satisfaction at the situation was not as triumphant and complete as he had anticipated.

“I am too tired to talk business this evening,” he said suddenly.

“I’m not talking business,” Raitzold answered quickly. He stood there with his head bent forward and peered into the eyes of the factory owner. “I wanted to tell you that I shall not leave the Estate, I shall not leave the Estate. You can’t hound me from it, not me. Before I turn it over to you—before I let you—I’ll smash up everything. Before I let you take over the Estate, I’ll kill all

the cattle, I'll cut down all the trees, I'll swamp the meadows, I'll set fire to the house, yes, I'll set fire to the house——”

“You'll set fire to the house? But you're not even insured?” the factory owner exclaimed, jumping up.

“If I were insured—I could not think of setting it on fire,” exclaimed the landowner. Two worlds had spoken. The next moment they were both silent, breathing heavily, head against head, two fighting animals, irreconcilable.

Herr Profet sat down again. His heart had begun to beat rather disturbingly, a new phenomenon during a business talk. True, this discussion, in the middle of the night, among the burnt-down buildings, this culmination of a long-standing feud, was indeed something quite out of the usual. “You are mad,” he said, breathing as heavily as the asthmatic Raitzold.

“Before I let you have the Estate,” Raitzold began again, “I'll demolish everything. I'll smash everything. Not a bush, not a fence, not a flower—my sister has established a little horticultural department—I'll pull up the rose trees and throw them on to the dung heap. I'll clog up the well. I'll—I'll—and as for the Sonnentreppchen,” he said, so quickly, so softly and so hoarsely that he sounded quite mad. “Do you think I'll let you have the Sonnentreppchen? I'll have the vines dug up, I'll have the grapes destroyed, I'll do it myself, here, with my own hands, every single vine.”

Herr Profet began to smile. “Huh, the vines,” he said. “But the soil will remain. And it's the soil that matters in the Sonnentreppchen.”

“Yes,” Herr von Raitzold gave a shout and threw up his arms. “It's the soil that matters! So you realise that it's the soil. And then a creature like you wants to come and build on this soil, wants to build sheds, and sidings. You and your small building plots and land development.



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You want to put up some filthy rubbishy buildings on the land of my Sonnentreppchen."

Herr von Raitzold was now weeping quite openly, not gently, not tearfully, but with loud sobs after each word. Without doubt it made an impression on Herr Profet. He had not thought of using the Sonnentreppchen as building land; on the contrary, he had always dreamt that the possession and the care of this old vineyard might raise him to another, a higher, class of society. As, however, the landowner's loud laments really touched his heart, he bristled up and said: "If I want to build, I'd like to know who can stop me. You certainly won't."

"Yes, I will. You dog!" Herr von Raitzold bellowed, and made a grab at his revolver, but it caught in his pocket, and it took him a moment to get it out. Profet went pale during this moment, but he did not lose his head. He even managed to smile a white-lipped smile, not from courage, but from fright. He managed to catch hold of Raitzold's right arm, turn it round, and take the revolver from the man's relaxed grip.

"You're mad. You're dangerous," he said with a gasp. His knees were trembling now, and he crumpled up into his chair. Herr von Raitzold sank into the other chair, rested his elbows on his knees and took his head in his hands.

Silence.

"Could I—have—a brandy—now?" Raitzold whispered a little later.

"Certainly," Profet murmured, and pushed the bottle towards him.

Raitzold found the bottle behind a cloud of dizziness; his eyes were blood-shot. Gradually the dizziness passed off. "In a moment—I'll go directly," he whispered, groping on the top of the desk until he had found his revolver, which he put back in his pocket.

A revolver is not really an argument, but this moment of heroism had produced in Profet a feeling of complete lassitude and exhaustion. The night seemed to have lasted for years already, it seemed an eternity since the heated uproar in the cinema, since the fire and its extinction. He was suddenly sick of the whole affair of the Estate. He had other things to worry about. "I'm sick of it, I have other things to worry about," he thought. He rose up, not quite steady on his legs, and Raitzold, too, got up and made a desperate effort to assume a military bearing. Both men were deadly pale and limp as wet rags.

"Good night," said Herr von Raitzold.

"I'm sorry my car is out of order. I'm afraid you must walk——" Herr Profet said.

When the landowner was already outside on the stairs, Profet added a further sentence: "The whole affair is still pending. Perhaps we can come to some agreement," were his parting words to his mortal enemy.

Fräulein von Raitzold stood by the wall, waiting, smoking and praying.

"What happened?" she asked, and her large forehead loomed broad over the light of the bicycle lamp.

"I think, we shall keep it—for the present," replied her brother.

"Where shall we go now?" Peter Karbon asked when he had got Elisabeth safely out of the seething uproar of the interrupted cinema performance, by continually planting his broad back between her and the crowd.

"I don't know," she said feverishly, but mechanically she turned in the direction of the Angermann House. Karbon let go her trembling hand. They began walking. After a little while he pushed his arm under hers. For

him, this gesture was the most natural thing in the world ; for her it implied the renunciation of all morality and decency and a descent into the abyss. The sky was flat, light, and two-coloured, red in the east above the burning factory, grey-blue and moonlit in the west over the town and Priel. On the main road to Obanger they met parties of disturbed and excited people who were wandering out to witness the fire.

"Come," Karbon said, guiding Elisabeth to a side street with blackened rows of brick houses, all alike, each with its small patch of garden and its lilac bush, the sad brown seed-leaves of which were black with soot. There was a smell of fire and also of refuse—for in Obanger a proper system of drainage had not yet been carried through. A few street lamps at the corners shone with small yellow circles of light.

They went, now walking close together, through the entire suburb until they reached a small flying buttress, by the town wall, and passed into a little alley, which got its name ("The Channel") from a small fast-flowing brook, which furnished power to a little saw-mill on the Priel side, and here, where they were walking, rushed loudly past the humble jerry-built houses. They went on, walking and talking, walking and talking, following the brook to the saw-mill, and then returning from the Priel side to the centre of Lohwinkel. They passed the courtyard of the Gymnasium, with its horizontal bars and the small hollow in the ground, which the boys had dug for practising long jumps, and they stood still for a moment by its iron fence.

"I was born in there," Elisabeth said, pointing to the little house with its fruit trees. To Karbon it was touching and incredible that anyone should have been born in Lohwinkel and lived there a lifetime.

"Sometimes when one drives through a little town



like this in a car, one wonders what the people are like who live in such houses, so far away from everything," he said.

"Well, they are like everyone else, those people," said Elisabeth. He looked at her upturned face, at her smile, so full of longing and surrender. He had known women smile like that all over the world, and he began to smile too.

"Yes, of course," he whispered.

They crossed the market-place, past the church, turned, just as the clock struck half-past nine, and walked round the church, past the old gravestones near the outer wall. They stood still in front of the duck pond with its rank smell, and in the shadow of a lonely street lamp they saw their two faces reflected in the dark water and then vanish tremulously. Then they came to the chemist's shop and with faltering steps reached the Angermann House. It took them nearly half an hour to walk this short distance. The street lamps were put out at ten o'clock, punctually, that is to say a little before the church clock struck the hour, for the tiny gasometer out at Obanger was regulated according to standard time.

Elisabeth stood in front of the Angermann House, her arms hanging limply by her sides, unable to make up her mind to go home. Her will power was not strong enough for her to walk the five steps which would have brought her to the threshold of her house. As Doctor Persen-thein had closed the wooden shutters, the house lay there dark in the universal darkness, and the motto carved on its wooden frontage had become illegible: "He who lives without malice, and has children of his own, is like a quiver full of arrows in the hands of the strong." Elisabeth had at times tried to discover some connection between this proverb and her own life, just as the daily quotations on her tear-off calendar seemed to her full of secret import and prophecy, though

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nothing could be made of them. They hesitated for a little while under the Tower, while the statue of Saint George above them attacked the dolphin-nosed dragon, and it grew increasingly impossible for them to separate from each other. True, Karbon had released Elisabeth's arm and now stood facing her as she leant against the damp wall of the archway. But the vibrating attraction of their bodies was so strong that they moved towards each other again almost at once. They stood breast to breast, each one conscious of the other's heart, beat. Then Karbon took Elisabeth's hand and laid it on his heart. The intimacy and sweetness of this was terrifying for them both.

"Your heart is beating," whispered Elisabeth, and Peter smiled like a drunkard. Some people passed them, and Elisabeth was vaguely and confusedly conscious that she was standing there under the Angermann Tower with a man, the way she had sometimes seen her little servant girl stand there with Zuschkau, the railway worker. But this thought remained trivial and indistinct.

Karbon felt that she could not make up her mind to go home, so he guided her back to the road which led to Obanger and away from the town.

"Another five minutes," he murmured.

She said, as in a dream: "The fire is still burning," as though this were sufficient excuse and explanation.

It was so foolish and so youthful, this wandering about in the night, as though linked together by thin red-hot chains. Peter Karbon, forty-three years old, was acutely conscious of the fact that it was one of those nights in which he lived the very essence of life. He said something about this to Elisabeth.

"There is only one thing that matters," he said, "this feeling of being alive, this all-pervading sensation, this—it is the only thing in life."

Elisabeth did not quite understand him, she remained separated from him by shining mists.

They walked on and on. Now they were again in Obanger, crossing the Backstein Strasse, which they had turned into an hour and a half before. They reached the place called "By the Wall" which bordered on Herr Profet's property. There they stood for long without speaking, staring at the fire, waiting for the flames to shoot up higher and higher. They did not leave there until late when the fire had begun to die down, as though by this they were chilled. They walked all round the factory wall, groping their way through the wet grass at the back of Profet's property until they reached the narrow road leading to the vineyards and down to the station. Elisabeth Persenthein, in the meanwhile, had become so tired that she seemed to be walking on clouds, and yet more awake than she had ever been in her life. The fire seemed to be over, the sky behind them was clear again, the moon was wandering towards the church spire with a hurt expression on her face and the top of the spire reflected a tiny shimmer. Down in the valley the Dösswald fire engine was on its way home. Peter Karbon and Elisabeth stood at the edge of the vineyards waiting for everything to grow still again.

"What are these mists?" he asked, pointing vaguely.

"That is the Rhine over there," she answered, and every word they uttered seemed weighty and important. Karbon recognised again the smell of nettles by the roadside, which they had passed on the evening of the accident.

"It must be somewhere near here," he murmured, sniffing about him.

As they went downhill, he put his arm round Elisabeth, and she felt at home and protected by his presence in a way she had never felt before. The mile-



stones in the Dösswald forest gleamed white on their path. It was now midnight, the roads were deserted, but Karbon and Elisabeth went on and on and on, whispering close to each other, stopping to melt in a kiss, then on and on again. . . .

"This is where it must have happened," he said, recognising in the darkness the tree trunk against which he had sat for an eternity holding the unconscious Leore Lania on his knees. He took out his cigarette lighter, and by the light of its tiny flame he examined the road, the tree and the curve. "Well, one's still alive," he thought, "one's still here—very much alive—alive with such a rapturous enjoyment." With a gesture of defiance he threw himself down again by the same tree stump, and took Elisabeth in his arms, listening—listening as a musician listens to his instrument, as a 'cellist to his sonorous and vibrating violoncello.

Then he began suddenly to talk about Fobianke, for Fobianke's faithful shadow had seemed all the time to be walking by them as though he wished to tell them something.

"Duty," said Peter Karbon, taking up a word which Elisabeth with her troubled conscience had long been whispering. "You say duty. But no one has yet been able to decide which duty is the right one, the important one: the duty towards others or the duty towards one's self. Fobianke—you know, I can't help thinking all the time about Fobianke—well, Fobianke is dead, isn't he? What can be said of him? He did his duty. I knew him well, you know: a chauffeur like that tells one all kinds of things, when one is on the road together for weeks. At one time Fobianke wanted to emigrate to Canada. But he hadn't the courage. His first wife died, while he was in love with some girl or other, a cashier in a cheap restaurant, a pretty, buxom girl. But when he became a

widower, he did not marry her after all. Instead he married a nagging widow, older than himself, but with some savings in the bank. He had no trust in life, no courage. Fulfilment of duty is a thing for weaklings. 'I've done my duty,' was Fobianke's motto, and then, suddenly, he is dead. Do you think a dead man rejoices because he has done his duty? Don't laugh, Elisabeth, I'm not a philosopher, I express myself badly. I don't think much of these unlived lives like Fobianke's. Believe me, at the time of the accident, as I sat here on this tree trunk, almost delirious, not knowing if I should come out of it alive, I regretted only the things I had not done, never any foolish act, never any—sin, shall we say?—nothing of the kind. I've had several narrow squeaks in my life, once a viper bit me in the jungle, and a negro doctor pulled me through; once I was the only survivor of twenty-four men when a trench was blown up. I think one should squeeze out of life all that one possibly can. Nothing else really matters. It's like swimming. If you have no confidence that the water will bear you up, it won't bear you up. If you have no confidence that life will bear you up, you'll always sink down. Duty! Duty! Washing dishes, making beds, cleaning boots, but where are you, you, you, you yourself, Elisabeth?"

When Elisabeth heard her name uttered so compellingly she opened her eyes for a moment, for she had closed them while Karbon gave vent to these vehement, confused, but still convincing words. His right arm lay under her neck, his left across her breast, and before her gaze the forest rose in a haze, like two black walls on each side of the road, and above, quite near, were now stars.

"Perhaps," she whispered. "Perhaps."

He buried her once more in a kiss. "I must go home," she whispered weakly, but when she rose, she did not move in the direction of Lohwinkel, but began to walk

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towards the station, as though something continually kept on pulling her away from the Angermann Tower and the Angermann House and the valiant Saint George, who now meant nothing to her. Her weariness made her feel so light, that she no longer felt her legs and feet ; all her limbs were asleep and numb. They had both completely lost track of time, Karbon's wrist watch had stopped, and now that the night-mists had risen and enveloped them to their knees, everything seemed unreal. Finally, after an immeasurable lapse of time, they reached the little Dösswald-Lohwinkel station. A white and a red light flickered between the tracks for some mysterious reason, for no train passed this way at night.

"Doesn't it look as though gnomes were working there in the middle of the night?" Elisabeth asked in a dazed voice.

In the little garden of the station the last sun-flowers of the season were lifting up their broad faces. The moon had grown smaller, and was waning. "Come, come," Karbon whispered, and led Elisabeth into the tiny open waiting-room, which looked like a verandah and smelt like a log cabin, of fresh damp wood and bitter bark. As the night had grown cold, Karbon took off his coat and put it round Elisabeth ; it was warm and tender like a living thing. "Come, we must talk over everything, quietly," Karbon whispered. Elisabeth began to tremble as violently as though he had uttered a threat. They sat for a long time in this ridiculous little waiting-room, in the middle of the night, and discussed everything. It was all madness, Karbon felt clearly, and he rejoiced that he was still youthful enough to plunge into such madness.

They sat, and talked, and were silent, and whispered, and got up, and walked on again, walked on and on, turned, and finally went towards the town. They had been walking all the night, they had been walking for



years, for ever. They told each other all their past and all their future. It was not yet grey dawn when they reached the Angermann House, but the morning dew was falling. It lay in tiny beads on Elisabeth's hair and on her cool lips.

"Good night, my darling, good night, good night," Karbon whispered untold times, as she stood on the threshold of her house and put the key in the door. It was terribly hard to part from her. "Good night. Think of me. Till to-morrow."

"To-morrow," Elisabeth whispered. She smiled a ghostlike, fleeting smile, as she heard the mortar beginning to trickle down when she opened the door into the darkness of the hall.

"I'll sleep on the divan," Elisabeth thought, as she stood in the hall, with the dreamy feeling that she had just returned from a long, long journey, as though she had sailed round the world. When she pressed down the latch of the surgery door—the Angermann House had still those heavy, queer-shaped latches of the sixteenth century—she was almost surprised that the door still responded with its old creaking sound which she had heard thousands of times. When she found that inside the light was still burning, she stood still in the doorway in surprise. The morning dew glistened in her hair, the pale ghost-like smile was still on her lips, her lips still swollen and tender with his kisses.

Doctor Persenthein sat there with a paper in his hand. Curiously enough he was not seated at the desk, but on the edge of the operating chair. He was not reading, and the hand that held the paper hung between his knees. He seemed deep in thought. He did not raise his head for a moment, and then he said: "Oh, it's you——?"

"Yes—it's I," Elisabeth answered. It was a meaning-

less exchange of words. The room was filled with a heavy oppressive atmosphere of misery. Cigar smoke drifted thick round the hard white light of the lamp and a tube with tablets lay opened on the glass table, a sign that the doctor had been trying to get rid of one of his periodic attacks of neuralgia. Damp, dirty towels lay on the floor in the corner of the room, the pail with the discarded cotton wool had not been emptied and a grey chilly sadness lay over the man and the room. Elisabeth recognised all this,—oh, she recognised it well as the atmosphere which had surrounded her life and her marriage till this enchanted day.

“Aren’t you asleep yet, Nick?” she asked pityingly, but meaninglessly.

“Is it late?” he asked in reply. The uncertain movement of her shoulders reminded him for the first time that earlier that evening, eternities ago, he had been anxious about his wife, and he added: “Where have you been so long?”

“There was a fire,” Elisabeth answered softly. Mechanically she took up the ash-trays, opened window and shutters and emptied the ashes, arranged a few fallen papers on the desk and picked up the dirty towels. Persenthein watched her, his head bent forward between his heavy shoulders.

“The fire was over hours ago,” he murmured.

Elisabeth came to him; and familiar as everything else was the gesture with which she clasped his head and rested it for a moment against her shoulder. He closed his eyes and breathed deeply.

“Come, Nick,” she said. “You’ve a headache, you must go to bed.”

“Where were you?” he asked stubbornly. He was dead-beat, like a runner who had exerted every ounce of energy, only to be last at the goal.

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“ I—I went for a walk with Herr Karbon.”

“ All night long ? ”

“ Yes,” Elisabeth answered stiffening and looking at her husband.

He shook his head. “ I don’t understand,” he said. “ It isn’t like you. What has happened ? ”

He moved towards her and leant his forehead against hers ; this, too, was a familiar movement, when he had a headache. She felt the throbbing of his strained veins. “ Is something the matter ? ” he asked, his face so close to hers that she could no longer see him.

“ Yes,” she whispered. The doctor had expected “ no.” His knees suddenly felt weak ; he had never felt anything like it.

“ What is the matter, then ? ” he whispered again, scarcely audibly.

“ Not now. We’ll discuss it later. Come to bed now,” Elisabeth said pityingly. She moved her forehead away from his, but she put her arm on his shoulder. She had given up the idea of sleeping downstairs. She felt so sorry for her husband, he was so tired, so depressed as he stood there, without any notion of what had actually happened.

“ Was it on my account that you waited up so long ? ” she asked, following him up the wooden staircase.

“ No,” he answered to her great relief. “ There was something else.”

“ A patient ? ”

“ No,” he said, switching out the light on the stairs and entering the bedroom with the slanting floor. “ Something quite different. I had a blow—about the worst thing that could have happened to me. I’ll let you read it to-morrow.”

An anonymous letter, Elisabeth thought immediately.



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“Has it—has it anything to do with me and Karbon?” she asked, hesitatingly.

“It concerns my Idea,” the doctor said, but he bit his lips quickly, for he was afraid he would begin to weep. Not until a moment later did he realise what Elisabeth’s question implied. “Oh, I see—you and Karbon—I see,” he said. He sat at the side of his bed, which creaked as usual under his weight, and took off his boots. He turned his head and his inflamed eyes slowly towards Elisabeth and looked at her in silence. “What is there between you and Karbon?” he went on, and turned away his head again. Elisabeth did not answer.

The windows were open and a bitter cold filled the room. Elisabeth stood for a while, her chin pushed forward and her hands hanging limply, in the darkest corner of the room, before she, too, began to undress. The knotted beams in the ceiling twisted themselves into queer faces. When Elisabeth closed her eyes, she still saw blue moving flames dancing over the black roofs. She went to the window and looked out, the dawn had not yet come. She wanted to pray, but she could not do so. She touched the tiny love wound on her lower lip with her tongue and yearned immeasurably to be alone so that she could think about Peter Karbon. Slow as he was, Doctor Persenthein took ages to get into bed. At last Elisabeth heard the usual nightly groaning of the spring mattress, which regularly announced the safe landing of her husband into bed. She moved again towards the centre of the room.

“Can I turn out the light, Nick?” she asked.

It was one of the inconveniences and inadequacies of their domestic life that they had no switch by the bed, and had always to go over to the other side of the room to turn the light on and off. This time Persenthein did not answer. Elisabeth turned out the light and went to bed

in the dark. She looked more than ever like the dead Sigismunda von Raitzold on her marble tomb ; she felt it herself, as she lay there in her cool linen night-gown, knees and toes outstretched, arms and hands close to her body, ready to defend herself against any event.

The merest trifles tell married people whether the other is asleep or lying awake in bed. Elisabeth needed only to hear the breathing of her husband to know whether he had gone to sleep, for his breathing became twice as slow when he was falling asleep. When she was awake, on the other hand, the rise and fall of her eyelashes on the pillow made a tiny rustling sound which Persenthein had often noticed with tenderness and amusement, although he had never mentioned it. The silence which followed her last question lasted so long and seemed to put such a world of separation between them that Doctor Persenthein began to be frightened that he might never find his way back to Elisabeth. He felt for her face with his hand. Yes, her eyes were open.

“ Why didn’t Lungaus have his proper diet ? ” he asked not unkindly ; it was something quite different from what he wished to ask, but it was a beginning. The unexpected gentleness of his voice gave her courage.

“ Oh, Nick,” she said, “ I simply couldn’t get through all the work any longer. I simply can’t do it any more.”

“ Yes,” he thought, and nodded his head in the darkness. “ She can’t get through it any more. All this misery has exhausted her just as it has me. But now all that’s over,” he thought.

“ It’s all over now,” he said.

“ What’s all over ? ” she asked breathless, half in fear, half in hope, that he already knew all about her, and that she would be spared having to speak, to tell him, to explain, to smash everything which had to be smashed.

“ It’s all over with my work. With my Idea, and all. Nothing’s come of it. All the work I’ve done is just

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rubbish," he said. "To-day there is an article in the *Medizinische*. Other people have known about it all for a long time. Only I, in this damned, God-forsaken town, have been so far away from everything that I've been making an utter fool of myself."

She raised herself quickly and bent over him, with her hands pressed on his bed. "But, Nick——" she exclaimed in fright. She was the only one in the world who had any idea of the catastrophe implied in his words. Her husband closed his eyes and surrendered himself for a moment to the warmth and comfort and sense of security in feeling that his wife was at his side. Then he looked at her, attentively, silently and long. It had grown a little lighter, just enough for the outlines of the windows to be visible and the pieces of furniture to begin to take shape in the darkness.

"What does the child mean—Rehle says—you want to leave—Is it possible?" Persenthein whispered suddenly to her as she bent over him. As he spoke he had an unknown, surprising feeling of fear, which almost burst his chest.

"Yes," she answered, almost inaudibly, and with a great effort.

"Aren't you happy? Aren't we happy, then?" he asked after a while, obviously so puzzled by this thought that Elisabeth began to smile.

"Oh, no," she replied.

"You never told me this."

"I never realised it myself."

"But now you know it. Why do you know it now?" Persenthein thought, and for the first time his thoughts flew to the other man, that Karbon, that fellow with his silk pyjamas and cosmopolitan manners, that lazy casual chap from another world, whom they had picked up on the road and who, in return, had upset town and household merely by his free and easy presence and by



the fact that he was so different from people in Lohwinkel. Persenthein's throat went hot and for a few moments he felt he had Karbon's throat between his fingers and was strangling him, that Karbon's teeth were fastened on his thumb as on a gag, and that only a low moan came from him. Elisabeth quickly turned her face towards him, peering at him in the dawn. The doctor relaxed.

"But that's all nonsense," he said. "What on earth are we talking about? It's only that we're tired. You are overwrought and so am I. Come—it's all nonsense."

Strangely enough, as Elisabeth obediently put her hand in her husband's when he reached out for it, what he said seemed almost true. The first light of day already caught the little mirror at the other end of the room. Here in these slanting beds in her own bedroom, under the cheap red satin quilt, everything to do with Karbon seemed to have become unreal. But she clung to it nevertheless.

"I've had so little out of life. I'd like to have something out of life. . . ." she whispered. Persenthein had been holding her hand so tightly that it hurt, but now he put her hand back into her own bed, as though it were some inanimate object.

"Elisabeth—it's not like you to say things like that," he whispered, frightened. She thought over this for some time. He had turned from her towards the wall on which the ugly pattern of the paper was gradually becoming visible.

"Then I must have expressed myself badly," Elisabeth began, trying to recollect, as after a dream, the endless talks of that night, the elation, the feeling of soaring, of being able to fly, which she had experienced. "There are so many things—such new things. I didn't know it, Nick. I always thought that I loved you. With Karbon—it's all so different, so different. I only found out now—no—wait. You don't really know me, you never look at

me, you don't really need me. Were you ever really happy with me, Nick? Oh, Nick, you don't know what it is to be happy; why do you need me, if you can't ever be happy? I could be happy—but you take it all away from me,” she repeated more vehemently, although he had not answered. “You need me for the house, yes, I know, you load me with work, you let me fetch and carry. But must I be just that? Sometimes I feel that I am like Lungaus, I really do, Nick. You treat him and me alike, I can't express what I mean. You exploit us all, you are inhuman, Nick, that's what it is; your work has made you inhuman. When I come to the door, I often wait—but you don't really see me, you never smile at me. You come home, you go into your study—do you ever even take my hand? No, you never even touch my hand, Nick. You never thought of that, it's not important to you. But it is for me. It was important to me,” she said, and the word “was” made the doctor catch his breath. “You—for instance,” she continued, “never help me into my coat, you never take things from me, you never help me to carry anything that's heavy. You never pick up anything I drop. You never make a fuss of me, you are never kind to me. You—wait, be quiet, I know what you are going to say. Yes, you do do *that* from time to time, but always so suddenly, like a shot from a pistol. I don't like it, no, I don't like it, it hurts me, it's degrading. If that is all you want me for—no it isn't worth my sacrificing my whole life for it. Everything could be so different, so different—so different—and I never realised it till now——”

Persenthein lay there in his own bed, as though on the further coast of an uncrossable ocean. “But, Elisabeth,” he said gently, “we are married, you know.”

“Yes, we are married, but my God, my God, Nick, is that all that marriage is? I clean your boots every day, they are all bent in front, because you walk so badly; I

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can't tell you how often I loathe your boots. And then the eternal smoke from your cigars—and every time you drink a cup of coffee you always put your cup on your desk and leave wet rings on it. How well I know it all, how sick I am of it all; everything is continually dirty, I am continually cleaning up after you—if that's all that marriage means and nothing else—well, one can just bear it as long as one believes that it has to be, and that there's nothing else. But if one then meets someone, whom one—and who can—Oh, Nick, I can't help it, but if Karbon wants to take me away from all this misery, I'll have everything, everything. No more worries, but journeys, the world, music and frocks, whatever I want, things I've never even dreamt of, everything will be so easy, and here everything has been so terribly difficult."

The words "has been" caused the doctor to sit suddenly upright. "Elisabeth," he said loudly, shaking her shoulders. "What are you talking about? Have you forgotten your religion?"

"Yes," she said uncertainly, turning her head towards her husband. "Yes, I know, Nick. But that's just it; my religion is no help to me now. The other is too strong."

The doctor let go her shoulders, but continued to bend his face over hers. His heavy body trembled from the strain of this uncomfortable position, but he wanted to be near her without touching her.

"Elisabeth," he said gently. "You ask if that is marriage. Yes, I think it is; not very easy for you—or for me. Everything seems a little distorted to you to-day; but, Elisabeth, marriage can't be turned into a sort of night club. The value of marriage is not on the surface; perhaps you don't realise it at the moment, but you will in time. We belong together, you and I, we support each other, we help each other. The child—I'm not speaking of the child as an argument in my favour—but, after all,



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she is there, our little girl, and later, when we are better off we want to have a little boy as well. Yes, I know, things don't look very hopeful," he said quickly, when he saw Elisabeth's mouth twitching in denial of what he said. "But things will get better. No one can prevent me from getting on, not me—as long as I have you with me. Don't you really know that you are everything to me, everything, everything in the world, that you are the mainspring, the very centre of my existence—even if I forget to help you into your coat—Elisabeth?"

She put her arm round his neck and took his head in her hands, not without tenderness and trustfulness, even though this, too, was a customary gesture. "Oh, Nick," she said gently, "it is all so difficult."

"Doing the right thing is always difficult," he said thoughtfully, and now he moved his head on to the pillow beside her and put his arm under her shoulders. "It is always unpleasant and difficult. Fighting, conquering, self-sacrifice, self-denial, self-control, those are the things involved in doing the right thing. And that is what marriage stands for as well as keeping faith. The other—oh, I understand how tempting it is. But it's not the thing for us, Elisabeth. It's not for people like us. The other thing, which is dangling before your eyes, is not marriage, it's only a love-affair."

Elisabeth drew away from him violently. "He is going to marry me. It was my first condition," she said quickly. "I told him this at once. He will marry me, of course."

At this, which sounded so innocent, Doctor Persen-thein began to smile, and he smiled rarely. His self-control had completely returned, as though he were about to perform a serious operation.

Like a tight-rope dancer, he was acutely conscious how carefully he must move, how excessively dangerous was his position, how the entire future depended on the way

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he acted in this decisive hour between dawn and sunrise. Elisabeth's hair smelt of fire and bitterness. She had become quite transparent, lying there on her pillow, with the little branding-mark of forbidden kisses on her lip. He felt an infinite love for his wife, a love that went deep, deep down within him. He felt an infinite anxiety for her, and, at the same time, something like a spark of joy, for she was near him, she was talking with him, she was saying such incredible things in her innocence, and this showed her trust in him, her dependence on him, and her incapability of telling lies. He placed her head on his shoulder as he had often done before, and she at once responded to the sense of rest and repose.

"He's going to marry you?" he asked carefully. "But, my child, even if a woman is married to a man, she can still be his mistress. Do you think you have any talent for that sort of thing? Don't you know what kind of woman you are?"

"I don't understand," she whispered.

"Do you know that he is already married?" he asked carefully.

After a pause, she answered: "Yes. He told me so. He is going to get a divorce."

"Can that be done so simply?"

"Yes, he says it's a simple matter. Just now his wife is somewhere on a ship on the Mediterranean. He says, when she comes back—he says that they have been estranged for some time."

Persenthein was filled with a burning rage against this Peter Karbon, for whom nothing seemed to matter or present difficulties. What an easy life, swimming about on the surface, in the midst of chaos and destruction.

"And then this girl, this actress, who is with him?" he said, and it hurt him terribly to think that Elisabeth was involved in all this sordid business.

"He has already broken off with her."

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“What! So quickly? So easily?”

“Yes, he said there was no difficulty about it.”

“You have a lot of courage, Elisabeth. Don’t you draw any conclusions? Don’t you see any parallel?”

“How do you mean?” she asked foolishly.

As a rule, in his daily life, Doctor Persenthein never spoke very much, and then only in short, half-finished sentences. Now, when he had to remain calm and express himself correctly, everything he said sounded a little abstract, a little cold; it was the phraseology of scientific works with which thousands of working hours had imbued his mind. He tried to translate his thoughts for the woman by his side: “Do you think that a man who uses up women like—like shirts or clothes—that he will stay with you till the end of life?”

“No,” Elisabeth answered, and a minute elapsed before she had her answer ready. “But I thought several times to-night, if I could only live that way for a year—or even less, for a few minutes, or a few weeks, I should not care what happened afterwards. I should not care at all. I can’t help it, Nick. That’s what I thought to-night.”

Though Elisabeth had tried to speak gently, her voice sounded so passionate, so unexpectedly vehement that her husband shrank from her terrified. In his terror was a burning, biting anger. And deep down in this anger was a feeling of a new, unknown sweetness. How strange she lay there, this wife of his, with her sudden hunger for life, how new she was, how unknown, after all these years of married life.

So far, Doctor Persenthein had forced himself to be calm, as concentrated and calm as though at an operation involving life and death. His manner had been almost dry in his effort to keep at bay the panic which had seized on his innermost soul. But now he, too, began to seethe with vehement emotion. He clenched his fists, saw red,



and tasted bitterness in his throat. He flung himself back into his bed, for fear he might strike or strangle his wife. His voice rasped, as he tried to speak. "To-night—you thought—but I sat here—such fear for you—and everything smashed for me to-night, all my work, everything—what will happen now——"

No, he gave it up. All this could not be expressed in words. He turned right around and lay down flat on his face, for it was now almost light and it gave him a slight feeling of relief to blot out the world and to smother his misery in the pillow. Elisabeth made a small helpless gesture and then was silent. "What shall I do?" she thought. She wanted to conjure up Karbon's face, or even his eyes, but for some unfathomable reason she could not do so. She held her breath.

She did not realise at once what was happening in the other bed. Looking sideways, with downcast eyes, she noticed that her husband's back was heaving in great, silent sobs. His two clenched fists, by his head, were leading a wild, convulsive life of their own. But all this happened without a sound.

"What is the matter? What are you doing?" she asked, and stretched out a finger to Nick's thin light hair. She did not understand until a moment later what was happening.

"Why, you are crying, Nick," she whispered.

He shook his head desperately between the sobs, which he tried to choke down. He was just like Rehle when she was very miserable.

"Are you crying about your work?" Elisabeth whispered in bewilderment.

Nick turned to her his streaming, troubled, harrowed face. "About my work? What nonsense! What do I care about my work! No, it's about you, only about you, only about you, you, you," he cried out to her. The oft-repeated word hit her like a blow.

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“About me?” she repeated, feeling strangely cool and weak, as though about to faint. Then she began to smile, and all her excitement and tiredness and perplexity melted into tears.

She took her husband in her arms, as she would have taken Rehle, and he looked very like Rehle with his moist eyes, which tried to hide their misery, and his mouth which had grown stubborn again, as it pressed itself against her open palm. His hair lay at her throat, warm and familiar. It smelt of cigars and iodine as usual, of course it did—Elisabeth smiled bravely as she realised, with an almost deadly stab of pain, that something had broken within her. She even put her thought clearly into words: “Something’s breaking within me,” she said, “a spring or something. It will never come back, that —” but she went on stroking Nick’s head and neck, which rose, thin and sinewy from the blue collar of his night-shirt. “There, there, there!” she said, “don’t worry, nothing is going to happen. There, there—there!”

A woman walked up a staircase with Peter Karbon, a woman stood by him on the deck of a ship (it was a ship in a photograph of some advertisement for coffee), a woman danced with him—but this woman was not Elisabeth.

“I need you, I won’t give you up, I’ll keep you, I’ll hold you, I’ll hold you, you’ll stay with me, no one shall take you from me, I’ll keep you, I’ll keep you, I’ll keep you,” Persenthein was murmuring into her hand.

“Yes, yes, Nick, yes, yes,” she was saying as she caressed him.

He raised his head and looked deep into her eyes, and now he again resembled Saint George. “I love you, you know I love you, I love you,” he said vehemently, and it sounded like a threat. It was an astounding word which rose up in the old Angermann House and remained

hanging under the ceiling-beams as though it had wings.

"Yes, yes, Nick, yes," said Elisabeth again. She was very tired and very unhappy, but yet strangely full of peace. "I thought I could do it," she thought. "But I can't. I don't belong there—I belong here. . . ."

It was as though she had tried in vain to open a very heavy door and had let it fall back; as though she had been swimming against the current, and now let it carry her away. As though she had been out in a storm and had now come home. . . .

What a curious thing is marriage. It is old, older even than the Angermann Tower, and more in need of repair than the Angermann House. Take for example a marriage like that of Doctor Persenthein and his wife; certainly not an unhappy marriage, but, on the other hand, not exactly all joy and gladness. Not very happy, and not very unhappy. One among hundreds of thousands of average marriages, in which the man is morose and the woman overworked, in which there is much talk of daily cares, and very little of love. A marriage, in which much is taken for granted and there are few surprises. Not much to hope for, certainly, with the horizon overcast, and no prospect; like a house without doors or windows. Husband and wife daily together and yet realms apart—a state of affairs to which men and women have been condemned since Paradise. A curious business, Marriage—often attacked and easy to attack, unsound and irrational in its basis, threatened on all sides. A house of cards, at its best; at its worst, the life of a galley-slave for its willing victims.

Let something come to imperil this marriage—it need not be any great miracle, any little incident will suffice, a passing disturbance, a light, a guide-post pointing to another direction, another person, a new hope, a new way to live—then marriage must collapse, you think?



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But it does not. It holds firm. Doctor Persenthein's marriage holds firm. Hundreds of thousands of marriages hold firm. They have the will to live, the resistance and toughness of those plants which grow on stone and flourish in hard conditions. And so one can only assume that, in spite of everything, some deeper forces are at work in Marriage—deeper and higher and very mighty, corresponding to all that is best in human nature. Forces which can be called eternal—for the short eternity of this cold little star, which is our home.

The church clock struck six. Rehle, in her little bed in the next room, was breathing deep and calmly. Upstairs, Lungaus began to stir about. Then the telephone rang downstairs and the excited voice of Keitler, the merchant, inquired for the doctor.

A motor-car drove through the Angermann Tower at this unusual hour and the Angermann House began to tremble. Frau Persenthein, who was tidying up the living-room, went, broom in hand, to the window, and looked out. She had put on her old three-cornered woollen shawl, with the knots tied together at the back, for the day was cold and frosty and she felt chilly after her wakeful night. It was a car from Schaffenburg, and there were three strange gentlemen in it. Frau Persenthein began absent-mindedly to sweep again. She felt completely exhausted, as happens when a soul has been forced to the limit of its strength and must have time to recuperate. She went to the top of the stairs and called down: "Don't let the milk burn, Marie."

For Marie, the little unreliable "help," had again put in an appearance this morning, and she was not the only person in Lohwinkel who had returned to work. Lungaus, too, had tramped off punctually, a good fifteen minutes before the factory siren began to whistle over the burnt-out sheds. The workmen had not talked about

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returning to work, but they were there in full force, and those of them who had been employed in the demolished sheds stood waiting in the yard, sniffing the bitter air and speaking little. Herr Profet had called a meeting of the works council for ten o'clock. Birkner was a little pale and carried his left hand in a sling, for he had been hurt during the fire; it was rather painful and he had stopped on his way to see the doctor about it.

In the Gymnasium, too, order now reigned. The boys were all there, they did not make quite as much noise as usual up to the time when the bell went for school, and nobody was late that morning. Gürzle, the head boy of his form, went in the interval to "Putex's" study and apologised in the name of all the boys for the inexplicable and rebellious things which had happened, to which, as he stood with his fat red ears before the Head Master, he applied the term "untoward incidents." Before that they had all sought the protection of their young master, Kreibisch, and he had probably prepared the way with "Putex" and persuaded him to adopt a conciliatory attitude. True, the whole school was ordered to stay-in after school—they called this a "children's party" among themselves—on Saturday afternoon, but, my word, it might have been much worse, and, after all, they had had their fun out of it. The middle-weight champion of Germany had come to their play-ground, and even the junior boys, who were only thirteen, had got into a cinema which was "for adults only." Besides, they had witnessed the fire at the factory. All these events had made such a tremendous impression on them, that, twenty years later, they would probably figure as "youthful memories" in the writings of sedate citizens of Lohwinkel. . . .

"You see, things are settling down again," said Doctor Ohmann, the mayor, to Haberlandt, his factotum, as he took off his hat and coat, cut the end off his morning cigar

and reached for the *Anzeiger für Stadt und Land*. "I feel that things are settling down again."

"Three strange gentlemen have arrived in a car from Schaffenburg," Fräulein Ritting, the seamstress, was telling the little assistant in the shop of S. Markus' Successor. Markus himself was standing at the door of his shop, leaning his head against the glass pane and staring out into the Square—a rather unseemly posture for a merchant. He was struggling with the beginning of a poem in the style of Klabund, but he could not get very far with it. "Shall I order more of the red onions?" his mother asked him for the third time.

"Yes, the red ones. Three hundredweight. *Auf Wiedersehen*, Fräulein Ritting!"

"Tell me, Herr Markus, don't you know who the three strange gentlemen are who came from Schaffenburg in the car?"

"I'm sorry, I don't, Fräulein Ritting—good morning, Fräulein Ritting——"

"It's not surprising that Madame's heart is troubling her, with all these excitements," Behrendt, the chemist, was saying to Frau Profet, who, dressed in black and powdered in white, had sat down on a chair in the chemist's shop. In a shaking hand she held a glass of water and was taking medicine tablets. "Chew the tablet, *gnädige Frau*! Then it will be absorbed quicker in the system, and I'll guarantee they will stop your palpitations," the chemist was saying. "Our little town seems to be quieting down again. But it took a catastrophe to bring the people to their senses."

"Did you know that yesterday, while we were at the cinema, they broke some of our window-panes?" Frau Profet asked, drawing down the corners of her mouth dolefully over the bitter taste of the tablets. "What dreadful things can happen when the workmen are egged on like that. It's jealousy, of course. I know all about it."



One can feel these things in the air, can't one? Especially when one is so exposed to attacks as we are. But who would have thought it?—the window-panes—Herr Albert had to sleep in a cold room, and he is so sensitive; of course one can understand how precious his health is."

"Really? Sensitive? One imagined that athletes were really quite different. He is very charming, isn't he?"

"Very charming, Herr Behrendt, very. A child. Really a saint. We shall hate him to leave. But now his manager has arrived."

And Frau Profet's loose chin began to tremble, at the sad thought that this last relief from the tedium of her meaningless existence was about to take its departure.

"Shall I wash your hair with toilet vinegar afterwards, Frau Bürgermeister," the young lady at Kuhammer's, the hairdresser, asked the mayor's wife, for the young lady was well-trained and knew her job. "Has Madame heard that three gentlemen have arrived from Schaffenburg in a car? They have taken rooms at the White Swan, the waiter came over here for a shave and told us about it. One of them is said to be a famous surgeon. They've come to see Herr Karbon from Berlin, the waiter says."

"How interesting," the mayor's wife answered, raising her wet head from the wash-bowl. "A great surgeon, you say? Has our doctor made a mess of it again, so that they've had to send for someone else?"

The Fräulein shrugged her shoulders. "Frau Doktor seems to have grown very friendly with Herr Karbon, at least, judging by what one sees and hears."

The mayor's wife, in turn, shrugged her shoulders. "Huh!—yesterday in the cinema, at any rate. . . ."

Peter Karbon was still in his pyjamas when the three strange gentlemen came to see him. One of them was broadly built, with the reddish-brown, open-air face and

the white forehead of an officer and a flying-man ; it was Erich von Mollzahn, the second of the four husbands whom Leore Lania had so far married. Then there was a dark-skinned giant with hair growing on the back of his hands, a broken nose, a Russian accent and a deep Russian laugh ; this was Simotzky, Franz Albert's manager. The third stranger was a slender man of medium height, with a suggestion of a slight paunch and shrewd eyes which looked out upon the world over a dandified little pointed beard ; and this was the famous dermatologist, Geheimrat Professor Raiffeisen. Karbon remembered having met the surgeon and the flying-man casually at some social gathering, and he and the manager were already well known to each other.

" We chartered this old bus in Schaffenburg. I was too impatient to wait for the local train," young Mollzahn told him. " Bibi sent an S O S and I was terribly worried about her. So I made off from Holtenau as quickly as I could, and your brother was kind enough to refer me to Professor Raiffeisen. So here we are, and the life-saving work can begin. How is Bibi to-day ? "

" To-day — Bibi — I've not spoken to Pretty this morning," Karbon answered, and his conscience troubled him so that he stared at his red morocco slippers.

" I see," Herr von Mollzahn answered. He was twenty-six years old, and his clear, hard eyes could make one feel uncomfortable. " If Bibi sends out an S O S, she must be jolly badly in need of help, as far as I know her," he added.

" We can drive out to see Pretty in ten minutes," Peter Karbon told him. " I don't think she is as ill as you imagine."

The famous surgeon drummed against the window-pane with his fingers, and said : " I only came here to please your brother. Actually, there is no more thankless task than to try and improve an unsuccessful cosmetic

operation. If the lady is nervous—she must probably be prepared to have me excise the entire scar and stitch it all up again. I am fully aware of the importance in the circumstances of the æsthetic results of this operation—but. . . .”

Simotzky, the manager, who in some unexplained manner had attached himself to this little life-saving brigade, felt that they were making too much fuss about Lania. Resting his hairy hands on his shanks, he asked gruffly and anxiously after his boxer, how his nerves had stood the strain, whether his appetite was good, whether he was sleeping well, what sort of life he was leading, and the actual condition of his muscles and his weight. “Oh, boy, boy,” he said gloomily, “in three weeks’ time my little fellow will have to meet Kid Rowles in the ring. How on earth can I make the lad fit in three weeks, if you drive him into a tree and he then guzzles so much that he gains six pounds in weight?”

Peter Karbon, depressed by all this responsibility, asked the gentlemen to wait for him in the coffee-room for a few minutes, while he dressed. He was terribly sleepy, and he had a heavy and oppressive feeling in the pit of his stomach. Two hours spent in early morning dreaming had now come between him and the fire of the previous night. He yearned for a substantial English breakfast, beginning with a large plate of porridge. Instead of this, he was burning his mouth with the hot, weak coffee of the White Swan.

Several telephone calls ensued. Simotzky, the manager, rang up Franz Albert, who was frantically excited and impatient, and whimpered in response like an infant to his nurse. Erich von Mollzahn spoke to Fräulein von Raitzold and asked her to prepare Lania gently for the surgeon’s visit. Leore Lania, who had dashed to the telephone, talked to Erich von Mollzahn: he was the best friend she had in the world, her only friend, her—



no, she was not so bad, but her spirits were down below zero—and they must come quickly—quickly——

Peter Karbon also spoke to Leore. “Good morning, Pretty. My conscience is troubling me. I’ll bring the noble surgeon out to see you, may I? Did you sleep well? May I come?”

Agitation at the other end of the wire, but a very cool answer: “Yes, as far as I am concerned. If you have the time. . . ?”

Telephone call to Doctor Persenthein during his surgery hours. “This is Doctor Raiffeisen, from Berlin, speaking. My friend, Michael Karbon, asked me to come to Lohwinkel to see our invalids. Naturally I wanted first of all to have a talk with you, Herr Kollege, as you are the physician in charge. . . .”

“Who is it speaking?”

“Doctor Raiffeisen from Berlin.” (No mention of Geheimrat or Professor.) “As my time is very limited, and as I naturally don’t want to call on your patient without you, it would be very kind of you if you would take me to call on the lady before luncheon. As I said, my friend, Michael Karbon—you know, Peter Karbon’s brother—asked me to come. I am convinced, my dear colleague, that you have already done everything that can be done. I don’t know whether my name is familiar to you. Raiffeisen. Perhaps you may have had occasion to glance at my book on cosmetic surgery. . . .”

Doctor Persenthein left his patient standing in the centre of the room. It was one of his “experimental rabbits,” Lingel, a workman, who stood sadly and respectfully next to the desk showing the doctor his infected gums. Doctor Persenthein felt as though a drum were beating in his breast, which seemed to have grown large and hollow. He hurled away his white overall, washed his hands, put on his short motoring-jacket, then changed his mind, and began to look for a more worthy garment. He

shouted for Elisabeth, and when she appeared at the top of the stairs he was incapable of telling her the great event. He embraced Rehle and knocked his elbow against the door of the shed. He was frightened to death, just as frightened as he had been before his final examination. He hurried off, then came back, for he had forgotten his instrument case; he stuffed some notes into it, and dashed off again, shouting to the crowd of steaming patients in the hall that there would be no consulting hours that day, that he could not see them either in the morning or the afternoon. Altogether, with all his haste, it took him twelve minutes to leave the house and go and see the "big-wig" at the White Swan. For the "big-wig," about whom he had often dreamt, was now actually in Lohwinkel—although the duck pond was still behind the church and at evening the goats were driven through the town. . . .

"And you were fortunate enough to come through without the least injury?" the surgeon, in the meantime, was saying to Peter Karbon in the coffee-room of the White Swan. They were waiting for the doctor, while Herr von Mollzahn had already gone out to look after the hired car.

"Just a few trifles, Herr Geheimrat, not worth mentioning. A sprained shoulder, bruises on two ribs, a slight concussion. But all's well again now."

"Really?" the Geheimrat remarked. He spoke the Bavarian dialect, but he made up for this by his perfectly chosen sentences. "Close your eyes, please. Stand still. Walk straight ahead. Look at my finger, yes—here—in this direction. And now. . . ." He held a glaring pocket lamp in front of Karbon's twitching eyes. But the reflexes were all in order. "Good. Excellent," said the Geheimrat. "You are to be congratulated on having escaped from a serious accident without suffering any serious consequences."

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"My chauffeur was killed, Herr Geheimrat," Peter Karbon said quietly.

"Oh, yes—so he was," murmured the surgeon, who was well used to uttering words of condolence.

Karbon was silent, and in this silence Fobianke's zealous and loyal spirit hovered through the coffee-room. He had lived so unobtrusively, poor Fobianke, with his hands on the steering-wheel, or standing, cap in hand, at the door of the car, or waiting at night in front of houses, where his master was spending a gay evening, methodical as to mileages, watchful in crowded traffic. Karbon still felt the gesture with which his chauffeur had placed the fur rug across his knees. Fobianke had planned, some day, to buy a little petrol station, with a little house and a vegetable garden. It was to be situated between Rheinsberg and Globzow. He had died so quietly, without making any fuss about it.

"How are you feeling, Fobianke?"

"Quite well, thank you."

"Are you in pain?"

"No, not now."

And that was all. Fobianke would stay behind in Lohwinkel with his wreath of *immortelles*, and young Weichert, who had long been keen to get his job, would be his successor. Peter Karbon sighed. Damn it all, he was having a melancholy morning.

"Here comes the doctor," he said, walking over to the window. He had to stoop when he crossed the room, for sticky fly-papers hung from the ceiling.

Neither did Doctor Persenthein feel any murderous impulse against Peter Karbon, nor did the latter's conscience trouble or depress him when he met the doctor. To tell the truth, when these two men met between the oleanders at the door of the White Swan, they had more important things to think about than the woman who had come between them. Persenthein was overflowing with



excitement when he was introduced to his famous colleague, and Karbon was overcome by dizziness and a buzzing in his ears when he saw the car at the door. It was a slight recurrence of the nervous shock he had experienced, and it cost him a tremendous effort to pull himself together sufficiently to get into the car and to sit down next to Herr von Mollzahn, who was getting very impatient.

"Well, off we go," said the latter, getting into gear.

"Where is Simotzky?" they asked.

"With his little fellow," was the answer.

"Well, then—let's be off," Peter Karbon said, clenching his teeth. The smell of petrol made him feel slightly sick, but this soon passed.

"You see, I thought I'd never drive in a car again," he said a little later to Herr von Mollzahn, because he felt that he had grown pale and that this pallor needed explanation.

"I know. When I had had my first crash, I swore that I'd never fly again. But one can't give it up. No animal is as tough as man," the flyer answered.

"Thank God for that," answered Peter Karbon.

The two physicians were sitting on the back seat. After stammering a bit, Doctor Persenthein had automatically relapsed into the respectful attitude of the days when he had been a student and a young assistant physician. "Has Herr Geheimrat considered——" and "Herr Geheimrat will agree with me that. . . ." Professor Raiffeisen slid mechanically, as though on oiled tracks, into the conversation, with the smooth graciousness of a famous man. It was the manner he assumed at consultations, when poor families spent their last penny in calling in the expensive specialist after a case had been bungled. Doctor Persenthein told him about Lania's case; it was a rupture of the upper lip, he had

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been obliged to use four needles, so far the case was progressing satisfactorily.

"Probably a new piece of mucous membrane will eventually have to be grafted," suggested the Geheimrat.

"I don't think so——" said Persenthein.

"Did you sever the mucous membrane?" the Geheimrat inquired.

"No—that—I mean, I thought——" Doctor Persenthein stammered humbly.

"But then, surely there is bound to be a contraction of the rim of the lip," said the Geheimrat.

Doctor Persenthein was silent.

"H'm," from the Geheimrat.

"You can see the Estate now," said Karbon in the front seat to Mollzahn.

"Does Bibi look—does it look—very much disfigured?" Mollzahn asked at the last moment, as they were driving into the gate on the well-worn path up to the house. His eyes expressed more anxiety than he knew.

"I don't think so. But I'm not entirely objective," Karbon answered stubbornly. It had been irritating him all along that this boy acted as though Pretty were his particular property and as though he, Pete, had neglected his duty and his responsibility towards her in a criminal manner. Further, he did not know how he was going to introduce this flying-man, who had hurried to Lania's assistance, to the very circumspect Herr von Raitzold who now stood at the door of the low Manor House ready to greet them. It was certainly a problem; should he say "Herr von Mollzahn, the husband of Frau Lania." But he wasn't her husband any more. "Her ex-husband?" No, that seemed bad taste. "Her friend"—but I myself am Leore's friend, Peter Karbon objected to his own thoughts. As a matter of fact the difficulty was overcome without his assistance, for the Raitzolds and the Mollzahns had relatives in common, some Dohnas



in Silesia, not the noble family of that name, but another branch which had produced many civil servants and Chief Foresters.

Lania had been undecided which of her two poses she should adopt—for that best describes her preparations for the visit of the two doctors. In the first place this great Doctor Raiffeisen's verdict meant everything to her, more than anyone could possibly imagine. Then, too, she was very much excited at the thought of meeting Mollzahn and Karbon. It was part of her nature to love complicated situations of this kind, and her spirit, always hungry for excitement, felt thoroughly at home.

She could pose as being ugly, depressed, desperate and pitiful—with the intention of inspiring possibly in these men some nobler and protective instincts. Or she could “make-up” and pose as beautiful, self-controlled, undimayed and rising above misfortune. Strangely enough, the elements of both poses were ready to her hand, and everything that she did, therefore, was half sincere and half sham. Just as heavy cut-glass breaks up the light into many glittering hues. Finally she had stood in front of the mirror and had conjured to the surface everything there was of beauty in her, everything she had let sink during her convalescence on the Estate. This method was more stupid and more primitive, she realised, but from her knowledge of men, much more certain to be successful. She faced the door, through which they had to enter, in such a way that only the uninjured side of her face was visible, and she was rewarded by seeing on all four faces the expression which she wished to see. Even that wooden lump of a country doctor seemed to come to life, now that he saw her for the first time in all her war paint.

“I have never seen a seriously injured patient with an injury as becoming as yours,” the Geheimrat said at once, with the charming tone of voice he adopted for very



expensive operations. Then he unpacked his instruments and began to examine the little suture with his probe. At some spots the scab had already fallen away. Persenthein, whose gums were cold with excitement, proffered some explanations.

"Theoretically it may not be correct to have exposed the wound as early as the fourth day," he said, for instance. "But I have my own ideas on the subject, I have had a number of experiences of small wounds healing more rapidly when they are left exposed. These experiences confirm—Herr Geheimrat may be interested to hear—my Idea——" he said, and his light scalp flushed under his thin hair.

"H'm," the Geheimrat answered, examining a tiny festering spot through a monocle, which was almost as strong as a lens and helped him to see out of his weak left eye. "Well," he said, "let's see," and "H'mph." After this "h'mph" there was a silence, which filled Doctor Persenthein and Leore Lania with the same wild panic of fear and hope. Karbon and Mollzahn had left the room. In response to a polite glance from the Geheimrat they had gone as soon as they had greeted Lania, and they were sitting down below in the study with Herr von Raitzold drinking wine from the Estate and talking impatiently about the weather.

Up in the guest-room the surgeon was putting his monocle back into its leather case, and the case back into his waistcoat pocket. "Good," he said. "Very good. Excellent. Really fine work. Could not have been better done, *gnädige Frau*. In a month's time there won't be a trace of it. Perhaps a tiny mark at the base of the nose, a little white speck no larger than a pin-head, an added charm to your already charming face. You, and my colleague here, are to be congratulated. Shall we ask your friends to come up and tell them how unnecessary our fears have been?"

As Doctor Persenthein's fingers had suddenly grown moist, he felt shy about taking the hand which the great surgeon was holding out to him.

"So Herr Geheimrat agrees—Herr Geheimrat thinks, too——?" he stammered, as they went downstairs to Fräulein von Raitzold's bedroom where water and towels had been laid ready for them to wash their hands. As they stood in this cool and half-darkened room, their cuffs turned back, in the typical attitude of all doctors, washing their hands, which were already a little rough from too much washing, the great surgeon said: "The small fester doesn't matter in the least, my dear colleague, but, you know, I always stitch wounds like that with horse-hair and I have always had good results with it. As a matter of fact, it was not my idea, it was recommended by our colleague Zulauff." As this famous man talked thus of one colleague to another colleague, Persenthein suddenly found his courage and began to tell the Geheimrat everything.

He told it all at one go, about his practice, about being stranded in this little town and how he hated it, about the lead-poisoning, and then, after they had gone out into the courtyard and were walking up and down along the border of Fräulein von Raitzold's flower garden, which showed the last signs of its autumnal life, he began to talk about his Idea, about the biological principle of readjusting the human predisposition through dietetic methods, of accustoming the human organism to certain dangers. He talked about Lungaus' case, about his notes, about the statistics he had compiled on the subject—some of which he had swept hastily into his bag and now brought forth with trembling fingers. He spoke about his success in healing exposed wounds, and his cures of trench rheumatism. He mentioned other cases among his working-class patients in Obanger, which were hopeful though not quite conclusive. He even talked about Rehle, this

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beloved and successful object of his experiments in a proper, healthy mode of life. And then, when the Geheimrat looked at his old-fashioned watch on its long thin gold chain, and said that what the doctor had told him, interested him, interested him deeply, and that they would not be leaving Lohwinkel by car until five o'clock in the afternoon, in time to catch the evening train from Schaffenburg, Doctor Persenthein summoned up all his courage and invited his famous colleague to be his guest in the Angermann House, first to lunch with him, and then to have a really good look at his work.

Not only had the Geheimrat read Doctor Wolland's article in the *Medizinische Wochenschrift*, but he happened to be a bosom friend of Professor Mehl, the founder of the Freiburg school, to which Wolland had referred several times. And the great surgeon did not think it in the least tragic—in fact, not at all serious—that the same mode of treatment, with the same results, had been applied on a large scale in Freiburg and here by Doctor Persenthein on such a small scale with such painful efforts. On the contrary, he grew more and more enthusiastic: "I take my hat off to you, or to any physician, who goes his own way in such difficult circumstances. Bravo, Persenthein. We need people like you. If your results are correct—I'll talk to Wolland. There is always room for able assistants. If your results are correct——" and then he said he would be glad to lunch in the Angermann House and have a look at Lungaus' case. Doctor Persenthein rushed into the hall, feeling as though a thousand lamps were shining around him, and telephoned to his wife that he was bringing home a guest for lunch. The Geheimrat, meanwhile, went upstairs again to fetch his bag and say good-bye to Lania.

He found her between the two men, by the curious old tiled stove. The day was so cool that a wood fire had been lit, but the guest-room had remained uncomfortably



chilly and even Fräulein von Raitzold's roses in the vase had a frozen look. Lania was talking about her eyes.

"Just imagine, Pete," she was saying. "Erich never noticed that my eyes were different. Pete noticed this the first day we met, Erich. Pete is an *homme à femmes*, you see. The right eye is green, the left one is brown. I prefer the green one, but the brown one photographs better. I always turn the left side of my face towards the camera. Thank heaven, that is the side of my face on which there is no scar, not even a charming pin-head——"

She was already joking about her injury, and everything else was a thing of the past.

The men listened.

"Are you both glad?" she asked.

"Yes," they said. Mollzahn's answer was somewhat too emphatic. (Actually, he would not have been sorry to have found his Bibi in a state of collapse and despair. It was this fortune-favoured and triumphant Bibi who had already made his life difficult enough and was not altogether too desirable.) Karbon's "yes" sounded a little depressed.

"Well—Pete?" she asked encouragingly, and placed herself directly in front of him. With a sudden decision—which was not, however, obvious as such, but remained a light and graceful gesture—she took his two hands and placed them in the charming little hollow between her shoulders and her breasts.

"Well, Pete?" Lania repeated, and she noticed a tiny movement of his nostrils. She knew enough. She abandoned this caressing gesture as gracefully as she had adopted it. "I feel such a fool," she said to the Geheimrat, who was just entering the room. "I have made such a fuss, and now everything is quite all right. So this horrid doctor did his job well, after all, it seems?"

“ Yes, he did,” Raiffeisen answered good-naturedly. “ You can thank him, and leave in peace.”

“ Leave ? ”

“ Yes, there’s no reason why you should not leave. It’s rather uncomfortable here, isn’t it ? As your physician, I would suggest that Herr Karbon takes you off to Baden-Baden this afternoon.”

“ Karbon can’t take me,” she said quickly.

“ Oh—why not ? ” Karbon said, just as quickly.

Lania touched the wound in her lip thoughtfully with her tongue. “ Well, I had really promised to go with Franz Albert,” she said. She uttered this shameless lie purely because it gave her pleasure to do so—and, also, because in her thoughts she had already played with this idea.

“ Albert will be hauled back to his training quarters by Simotzky as quickly as possible, that’s certain,” Herr von Mollzahn announced.

“ The main point is that you go to Baden-Baden as soon as possible,” the Geheimrat said and took his leave. He kept the second half of his sentence to himself : “ And I don’t care a damn which of these fellows goes with you.”

“ Of course, I’ll take you to Baden-Baden,” Mollzahn said somewhat stiffly. “ I’ve got three days’ leave.”

“ Well—that is nice,” Lania answered, looking at Peter Karbon, who stood there feeling a little superfluous. “ I must be back in Berlin by the end of the week. Shall I see you then, Pete ? ” she asked casually.

Peter Karbon shrugged his shoulders. “ My God,” he thought, “ the complications are only just beginning.” The memory of Elisabeth overcame him with all its gentle force.

Down below, the car gave a warning hoot. Persen-thein was sounding the horn and Fräulein von Raitzold, in her stable trousers, stood next to the car very stiff and straight.

“Life will be very quiet here again,” she said, and, as her pipe was in her mouth, she sounded gruff rather than sentimental.

“What’s happened to you and Karbon?” Herr von Mollzahn asked on the stairs, before they turned the corner, round which Karbon had already disappeared. “Have you separated?”

Leore stood still, flushing in the red light which came through the grape vines. Then she began to smile. “Not finally,” she said slowly, “not finally.”

This Doctor Persenthein had no idea of the difficulties he was causing his wife when he invited a famous man to lunch with them at twenty minutes’ notice. There was no money in the house, there were no provisions, the kitchen stove was smoking most abominably, and Marie had broken the only one of the four dessert plates with unchipped edges. Until noon, Elisabeth had been performing her daily tasks in a semi-conscious state, dully expecting that some extraneous event would force her to make up her mind either to stay here or to leave—she herself did not really know which course she preferred. Her husband’s alarming message at twenty minutes to one thoroughly aroused her. For half an hour the Angermann House seemed like G.H.Q. during an offensive, but in the end she managed everything. Frau Bartels lent her silver; Herr Markus, to whom she had telephoned shamelessly in her hour of need, lent fifty marks in cash; the little maid of all work was ironing table napkins; Rehle ran out to buy some tinned goods, some parsley and some whipped cream. Seyfried, the butcher, sent a fillet of steak, and “Putex” himself contributed some dishes of quinces and bergamot pears for a very special dessert. Elisabeth cooked, fried, laid the table, lit the stove, which had gone out, mixed the salad, and again lit the stove, for again it had gone out, while Rehle marched



over to the White Swan to fetch two bottles of the Raitzold Sonnentreppchen wine. Elisabeth washed her hands with pumice stone, put on her blue frock, lit the stubborn stove for the third time, washed her hands again, whipped the cream, tasted the dishes she had prepared, scolded the little maid, and, much to her own surprise, was strangely relieved not to have a second's time in which to think of Karbon or herself or anything else until the exciting moment came when she welcomed the distinguished guest in the hall.

The Geheimrat, in the meanwhile, had mellowed to the extent of dropping his formal and professional manner, and had brought to light the cheery Bavarian inner-lining of his nature. He kissed the hand of his colleague's wife, who had tried to cover up the odour of washing-soap by rubbing on some Eau de Cologne at the last moment. He contemplated Rehle with admiration and increasing amusement. He ate absent-mindedly, but he ate a great deal, drank a considerable amount of the Sonnentreppchen wine, and talked shop so extensively, and bandied so many Latin phrases with Doctor Persenthein across the table that few German words were uttered by either of them.

Apart from the fact that the vegetable dish had a crack, that the fillet of steak was somewhat high (for it had been hanging in Seyfried's shop since Saturday), and that, most unnecessarily, the little maid came in shuffling in felt slippers which showed holes at the heels of her stockings, to ask a question in a loud whisper, the meal as a whole was a success.

Immediately afterwards, even before they had lighted their cigars, the gentlemen retired to the surgery to discuss in peace Lungaus' case and Doctor Persenthein's Idea.

The doctor came out of the surgery again and found his wife where she belonged ; namely, in the kitchen,

washing up dishes. He pressed her hand firmly and silently—though he had intended to say so many important things. Instead, he murmured something about coffee and cake at four o'clock, and then finally disappeared. His eyes were bright and the muscles round his mouth were taut. It was the way he looked when he was attending a birth, an operation or a death.

"I'm going out to get cakes," Elisabeth said. She felt as though she were being called somewhere, she did not know where, as though someone were calling for her to leave the house, to go into the street, or even farther away. Perhaps, however, this was merely a trick played on her by her overwrought nerves.

"May I come, too?" Rehle asked.

"No," Elisabeth said sharply, wanting instinctively to be alone. She took up her shopping net and left the house, pressing firmly against the front door to open it, for a gust of wind came sweeping down through the Angermann Tower. She crossed the road with her head bent, walked up the market square and then down the side street which opened on to the White Swan and was, incidentally, the way to the shop of Jännecke, the baker.

Peter Karbon, who had tried in vain to sleep a little after lunch, was now standing irresolutely at the window of his huge and incredibly uncomfortable room in the White Swan.

"Something must be done," he was thinking, "and it must be done soon. I can't stay for ever in this God-forsaken town." He was restless, homesick for his business, his office, his meetings, his journeys, for movement, activity, work. He felt so sleepy that he shook himself. "I must talk to this Doctor Persenthein," his thoughts continued, "that's no great difficulty. The matter is plain enough."

But really he felt that things were not quite so settled, not so clear-cut any more. "I love Elisabeth, yes, I love

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her," he assured himself, and this rather high-sounding and pathetic "I love her" was not an articulate thought, but a vague, undefined feeling. "This doctor does not seem at all old-fashioned, on the contrary——" Karbon went on thinking. He smiled slightly and understandingly as he thought of Persenthein's cranky eccentricities. Peter Karbon and his kind considered people "old-fashioned" who took things seriously, who kept their promises and obeyed the laws. Modern people were people like himself, or Herr von Mollzahn, or Pretty, or his wife, his brother or his son. Flexible human beings, deeply convinced of their own unimportance, who took nothing very seriously and were open to argument. Everything depended upon whether this Persenthein was modern enough to listen to argument.

"Elisabeth," Karbon tried to think again, to think with the intensity of the last few days; but he did not quite succeed.

"Beastly weather," he said reproachfully out loud, as though the weather were to blame for his indecision. And then he went on looking down on to the street, irresolutely and a little stupidly.

As we know, Frau Persenthein, always conscious of her husband's prestige, never left her house without wearing a hat—and if anyone had seen her, the night before, walking with Herr Karbon bareheaded and exposing her shimmering hair, they would have known by this fact alone that she was in a state of demoralisation and confusion. This afternoon she had put on her hat and her coat, for it had become very cold. She was wearing her "new" coat, which was three years old, and not the old one she had worn before Rehle was born, and in this dark grey coat, with its mother-of-pearl buttons, she was struggling to cross the Square, fighting against the wind which was growing increasingly stronger.

"I've had enough of this view," Karbon thought ill-



humouredly at his window. "I keep seeing the same two dogs and the same old man who comes out of the door in his shirt-sleeves and braces, takes off his cap, scratches his bald head, puts his cap on again, and goes back into the house. And how frightful the women look in a town like this. It ought not to be allowed."

When his thoughts arrived at this point, Peter Karbon received a blow, no, nothing annihilating or tragic, just a little slap in the face—but it was an impression which could not be obliterated, brief as it was. For Elisabeth, struggling past, in her hat and coat, carrying her shopping net, raised her face at this moment. She was unable to pass the inn without looking up at his window, and he recognised her. Involuntarily he stepped back from the window into the room. He stood there immovable, as though the slightest movement would cause him to be discovered.

"Well, what does it matter?" he thought a moment later. "She is poor, as we know. She isn't a woman of the world, of course she isn't. We'll buy her clothes, she has a marvellous figure; well-dressed, she would look like a princess. She is a woman who is charming even in her kitchen apron."

He remained standing for some moments, for about four minutes, to be exact, in the centre of the room—then he took his cap and his coat, went down and placed himself between the oleander trees at the entrance to the inn, to wait for Elisabeth's return.

"Oh," she said, standing still, her shopping net filled with cakes. She was wearing gloves—all the ladies in Lohwinkel wore gloves—and he sought in vain for the warmth of her hand, in which he had hoped to find some vague support.

"How are you to-day?" he asked, sauntering along next to her. She, too, was walking more slowly.

"Thank you. Did you get home safely?" she asked

in turn, and both of them avoided calling the other by name. Elisabeth's voice was pitched a bit higher than usual, it sounded a little thin.

"We have a famous guest in our home," she added, smiling and lifting her shopping net a little.

"Yes. The high priest has given your husband his blessing," he answered.

Elisabeth's left eyebrow had begun to move involuntarily and was twitching nervously.

"It's nice that we've met, isn't it?" he said.

"Yes, it had to be," she answered seriously.

He took her arm and they began to walk faster, because the wind was blowing them along, together with eddies of dust, scraps of paper and yellow leaves from the lime trees.

"Oh, no," she said, moving away from him in almost a frightened manner.

"Come over here," he said, "it's quieter over here." He guided her round the corner of the church to the east side of the building, where they were protected from the wind. They walked along silently until they reached the little cloister surrounding the gravestones. Here they stood still. Elisabeth raised her face to his. She smiled, without knowing herself what an imploring expression there was on her face.

"Do take your hat off," he said softly. And then he did so himself and stroked her hair, which was less shimmering to-day than it usually was.

"I wanted to tell you, yesterday—doesn't count," she said still smiling.

"But, Elisabeth—what has happened——?"

"It doesn't count. What we discussed—doesn't count," she whispered. "I can't leave here——"

"Can't you?" he asked, lost in thought, and looking at her. It did not occur to him till a moment later that he ought to oppose her violently. "But you must get

away," he said, but there was no real force in his voice. He hummed again the aria of the night before. "Come with me, stay with me, we shall be madly happy, Elisabeth," he ventured, but there were some false notes in it, as though it was an old barrel-organ. He fell silent.

They had now reached the duck pond, with its surface ruffled by the wind, and its zinc-grey shimmer. A bright red match-box floated on it. On the opposite bank, Schmittbold, the street sweeper, was performing a profoundly autumnal duty: he had set fire to small piles of autumn leaves, but they were only glowing, not burning.

Karbon put his arms passionately round Elisabeth to kiss her. He still held her felt hat in his hand.

"No!" she cried softly, pointing in fright to the man on the other side behind his piles of leaves.

Karbon looked round carefully, and then drew Elisabeth into the cloister. He took her in his arms behind an ancient bulky pillar, which rose plump out of the ground without a pedestal. They both stood still, holding their breath, as though they were listening for something, as though they were expecting something, something that did not come—either to him or to her. He was still trying to recapture on her lips the feeling of intoxication of the previous night, when she parted from him.

"You see," she said earnestly and her words sounded quite childish, "it is all over already." She was still smiling. "How mad one can be at times, can't one?" she said. "Give me my hat. I must go home."

"What are we going to do now? What is going to happen next?" he asked.

"You must pack your bag and leave. They are leaving at five in the car," she said, already starting to walk back through the cloisters, round the church and by the main road where everyone could see them.

"Would you rather I left?" he asked.



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“ Oh, yes,” she answered, and nodded her head.

“ All right. Then I’ll leave. But that doesn’t mean anything, really. I’ll write to you. I’ll come back to fetch you one day, Elisabeth.”

She listened to him seriously. Now, she kept on thinking, now, now, now. For a moment the pain was deadly, deadly. This is like dying, she thought, as she walked on, fixing her mind madly on this pain, which was eating into her soul.

“ Don’t come any further. That’s enough. I want to go into the church,” she said suddenly. She could not bear it any longer. She simply left him standing there, under the portico with the stone angels, staring up helplessly at those grotesque chubby faces. For a moment he remained standing there, where she had left him, a hurt expression on his face.

“ All right. Then I’ll leave,” he said stubbornly out aloud. He hesitated for a moment and then crossed through the dusty wind to the White Swan.

“ That was not a real parting,” he thought, “ how touching it was to see her fight against her tears. Fundamentally she doesn’t really care about love. One would have to have tremendous vitality oneself to keep a woman like that up to the mark. I don’t know whether I——”

There were only two places in the world where Elisabeth Persenthein could cry her eyes out undisturbed; one was the church by the Madonna in the side altar, and the other was the shed by the side of the Angermann House. Her eyelashes were still glistening with tears when she reached home. The two doctors were sitting in the surgery which they had filled with huge quantities of cigar smoke. The notes concerning the triumphant case of Lungaus were strewn about the desk, the window-ledge and the floor. Persenthein was glowing with excitement. Even the “ big-wig ” looked jubilant.

“ You have a marvellous fellow for a husband,” the Geheimrat said, when Elisabeth brought in the tray with coffee and spritzkuchen. “ A splendid fellow—do you know how splendid he is, Frau Doktor ? Much too clever for this small town. We must do something about it—and, dash it all, we must find a place for him, even if it’s only as assistant at a first-rate hospital, where he will have enough material to work on, and can get busy. It’s not always beer and skittles to have to do with a man like that, is it, Frau Doktor ? I can well believe that. But that’s the kind of man we need. We need fighters, we need thinkers, people who would rather die than give up thinking. Thinking—yes, that’s what we need,” he said, raising his finger in a professorial gesture. “ Thought is an unyielding master, Frau Doktor, it makes people hard. There are plenty of others in the world, bluffers, loafers, men like this Karbon, who live only for their pleasure. Charming people, of course. But they don’t help us forward. It’s men like our colleague here, who make for progress. And they are rare. My respects to you, Frau Doktor ! And thanks for your charming hospitality. It’s time for me to be off.”

Elisabeth was not in the mood to answer much. Nor had she heard everything he said. She stood gallantly at her post, with a polite wifely smile on her lips, until the Geheimrat left the Angermann House. Doctor Persen-thein followed his distinguished guest. He could not tear himself away from this conversation, which had fallen to him after years of hunger. Rehle, holding the Geheimrat’s hand, attached herself to them as a matter of course.

Elisabeth was left alone, she felt numbed. What next ? What next ? What next ? asked her tired beating heart. She groped on the floor for the notes on Lungaus’ case, and put them neatly into a drawer of the desk. She pushed the easy chair through the door between the bedroom and

Rehle's room. It was very quiet in the house, no one breathed, no one. She wondered for a moment whether the Geheimrat's enthusiasm had been due entirely to the notes, or whether the Sonnentreppchen had contributed to it. It had all sounded a little strange, but it had kindled a tiny distant light of hope within her. Nick. Nick? she thought. She called his name to herself, as though in quest of someone whom she had lost. She got up, and went down to the surgery, which was filled with Nick's atmosphere, with his work and with his being. She stood in front of the steriliser, gazing at her distorted reflection in the nickel plate and tried to think, but her mind would not work. It will be all right soon, she comforted herself. She carried out the tray, washed the coffee cups and noted a few figures in her account book. She went down to the basement, shooed Katrinchen the spider into her corner, swept away the cobwebs and polished the dull metal handles. Time passed, passed, passed. One could let oneself drift as gently on time, as on a river. To-morrow, in a week, in a month, in a year, everything would be different, and perhaps better. Frau Persenthein went upstairs and looked out some linen that needed mending. A lot had accumulated during the week.

There was a ring at the bell.

No, there was no cause for this last flickering and joyous fear which shot through forehead and breast. Downstairs stood Markus, his violin case in his hand.

"Good evening, Frau Doktor," he said simply. "I thought it might be a good day for a little music."

"Why?" she asked.

"Oh—it just occurred to me. I can't express it. I thought, music would be good."

"Yes——?" she asked dubiously, but not ungrateful for Markus' presence. She led the way upstairs to the living-room.



“ You see, Frau Doktor, I saw the car a little while ago. They all drove out together to the Estate to fetch Frau Lania. Your husband was with them too. I thought you were alone at home and might perhaps be feeling dull. They are all leaving, and we stay here. So much excitement and restlessness, and now nothing remains. It makes one a little sad. I thought—that you might be feeling this too. I thought—it might be affecting you slightly, too. . . .”

“ No,” Elisabeth said, very reserved. But she opened the piano as she spoke.

“ So many half-results,” Markus said, as he unpacked his violin first from its case and then from its cinnamon-coloured silk cover, which, curiously enough, smelt of coffee beans. “ But what do we really get out of it here in Lohwinkel, now that everything is over? The workmen, for instance, have obtained a slight increase in wages, but even so, it’s not their former wage rate. And I’ve heard that the boys in the Gymnasium are to be allowed to smoke, yes, ‘ Putex ’ has given in—but they may smoke only on Sundays and never in public. The Raitzolds will stay on the Estate, I hear. But for how long? Until the next payment of interest falls due. Herr Profet has been a little humbled, but only a little. It’s these half-things that make one hate life. No complete joy, no complete misfortune. Would you be good enough to sound the A, Frau Doktor? ”

Elisabeth struck the note, first the A by itself, then the whole chord in D minor. It was a little out of tune and sounded more thin than sad. She half turned towards Markus and said: “ I must have the piano tuned soon.” She had uttered this sentence a hundred times before. She always said it before they began to play. Markus no longer paid any attention to it.

“ Take a woman like Lania, for instance,” he said, “ she will never be quite as beautiful as before. But still, she

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will not be hideous, her beauty will not be so ruined that one could call it tragic. I half fell in love with her, when I think of it now. Everything is only half and half. And only that poor Fobianke was completely killed, 'fully and completely,' as those idiots in the *Düsswelder Anzeiger* always put it. I thought we might play our Brahms Sonata, the *Meistersinger* Sonata in A, Frau Doktor."

And Herr Markus tucked his violin, with its cinnamon and coffee cloth, under his chin and bent his short-sighted, intelligent and sensitive Jewish head over the black swarm of notes. "I'm a little out of practice," said Frau Persenthein, looking at her hands on the keys. She still had a little wound on them from an unsuccessful attempt at manicure.

The church clock struck five, ten minutes too late. As Markus drew his bow over a fifth, a motor-car passed the house and left the town by the Angermann Tower. It might have been one particular car, or just another, just any car. Elisabeth would have liked to go to the window, but she did not do so. She kept firmly to her keyboard until the car passed away. The house trembled, and the mortar trickled down.

A moment later, Frau Persenthein did get up. She fetched a duster and, sensibly enough, wiped away the tiny heap of chalky dust which had fallen. She smiled as she did so. It was not so very difficult to smile.

"It's nice of you to have come to-day, Markus," she said, and seated herself again at the piano.

And so, with a half-sounded chord in A major, Lif went on. . . . .

THE END

823-92

Sam: Results of an accident

Acc No: 10234

B34R

18De'43

7 Ja'46

1 Jo'46

18 Jo'46

18 Ji'46

15 Ag'46

14 Se'46

8

9

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Books are issued for  
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Books lost, defaced or  
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have to be replaced  
by the Borrowers.